OCT 25 1929

ALL-STORY

Combined with MUNSEY

Nov. 2

Love Stories *of* Every Land

20¢ Canada 25¢

On Sale Every Other Wednesday

Google
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Newest Styles
Dignified Credit at Saving Prices

10 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

12 Months to Pay

$42.50

DT27- The "Bridal Blossom"—Hand pierced lace design engagement ring of 18K Solid White Gold, genuine blue-white diamond of rare brilliance. $3.46 a mo.

$48.50

DT12-Dazzling cluster of 7 perfectly matched genuine blue white diamonds; hand pierced 18K Solid White Gold lady's mounting. Looks like $750 solitaire. $3.96 a mo.

$42.50

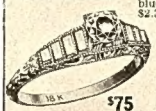
DT10-Gorgeous lace design hand pierced 18K Solid White Gold dinner ring; 3 fiery, genuine, blue-white diamonds; 2 French-blue sapphires. $3.46 a mo.

$29.50

DT26 - Latest style, modernistic effect 18K Solid White Gold lady's ring; fiery genuine blue-white diamond. $2.37 a month.

$50

DT28-Gorgeously hand engraved 18K Solid White Gold "Bridal Blossom" wedding ring; 5 fiery genuine blue-white diamonds. $2.37 a mo.



$75

DT23-Modern, square-prong, engagement ring in new "step" design 18K Solid White Gold set with specially selected dazzling, genuine blue-white diamond. $6.16 a month.

$50

DT7-New, massive, gentleman's ring of 14K Solid Green Gold and 18K Solid White Gold top; with a flashing, genuine blue-white diamond. $4.08 a month.

Sent for $1 — **Balance 12 MONTHS TO PAY**

No Red Tape
No Delay

$27.50

DT 31 - Nationally known **ELGIN** or **WALTHAM!** Handsomely engraved new style case. Guaranteed Elgin or Waltham movement. **Warranted 14K White or Green Gold filled 25-year case.** Latest style flexible mesh wrist band to match. $2.21 a mo.

$27.50

DT22-Gentleman's massive, hand engraved ring of 14K Solid White Gold Imported black Onyx with a genuine diamond and any carved initial or emblem desired. $2.21 mo.

$37.50

DT8-Diamond wrist watch. 14K Solid White Gold engraved case; **2 genuine diamonds, 8 emeralds or sapphires.** Guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Pierced flexible bracelet with sapphires or emeralds to match. $3.04 a month.

$24.50

DT9-The "Princess Pat"—14K Solid White Gold engraved case, guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Engraved genuine "Wristacrat" flexible bracelet to match. $1.96 a month.

Guaranteed Savings

Direct Diamond Importations and large volume buying for both our National Mail Order business and our Chain Store system enable us to offer you superior quality genuine diamonds, fine standard watches and exquisite jewelry at saving prices which are beyond comparison. All of this with no extra charge for the added convenience and advantage of dignified, liberal credit.

How to Order

Just send **$1.00** with your order and your selection comes to you on **10 Days' Free Trial. No C.O.D. to pay on arrival.** After full examination and free trial, pay balance in 12 equal monthly payments.

Satisfaction Guaranteed
10 Days' Free Trial

You have the full privilege of 10 days' free trial—if not completely satisfied return shipment at our expense and the entire deposit will be refunded. Written guarantee bond with every purchase.

All Dealings Strictly Confidential

A whole year to pay! No extra charge—no red tape. **You take no risk**—satisfaction absolutely guaranteed or money back.

Gift Cases Free

Every article comes to you in a most beautiful and appropriate presentation case.

IT'S A BULOVA $29.75

DT5 - Nationally advertised guaranteed 15-jewel Gent's BULOVA watch. White Gold filled case, "dust-tite" protector; radium dial and hands; latest style woven wrist band to match. $2.39 a mo.

CASH PRICES AT CREDIT TERMS

Send for this **CATALOGUE**

FREE To Adults

Completely illustrated new catalog of genuine diamonds; Bulova, Elgin, Waltham, Hamilton, Howard, Illinois watches; fine jewelry and silverware at special prices. **Write now to get your Free Copy.**

DT19-Nationally known 15-jewel **WALTHAM** movement; **20-year** warranted engraved **White Gold** filled, 12 size, thin model, decagon case. Tested and regulated. White Gold filled knife, fine Waldemar chain. All complete in handsome gift case. $2.21 a mo.

ESTABLISHED 1895
ROYAL DIAMOND AND WATCH CO.
Address Dept. 42-Y, 170 Broadway, New York

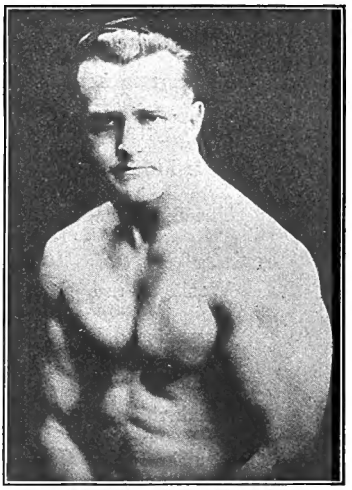
1 inch to your biceps 2 inches to your chest

in 7½ *hours*

A marvelous system of muscular education that transforms weaklings into strong men almost overnight. . . .

This is *not* a fish story. It's a fact! When I say I can add one whole inch of real live muscle to each of your arms and two whole inches of the same wonderful strength across your chest, in just 7½ hours, I mean just that.

But I don't stop there. I do things with your body that even you never dreamed of. My business is to build muscle, and the health and strength that always come with muscle. In the past 19 years I've taken over 200,000 puny little underdeveloped bodies—coaxed them along—worked on them—filled them with new life—new hope—new terrifying strength that forced their owners to be powerful, fighting, proud he-men. And how simple it all is under my instruction!



EARLE LIEDERMAN—*The Muscle Builder*
Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling," "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," "Endurance," etc.

Here's How I Do It!

All I ask of you is 7½ hours of your spare time, divided into 15 minute periods for 30 consecutive days. In those 15 minute periods you are to do exactly as I advise, using the apparatus I send you. At the end of the 7½ hours step before your mirror, and marvel at the transformation.

Could that great, handsome figure be yours? Those huge broad shoulders—that immense barrel-like chest with its powerful lungs—those tremendous arms and wrists, ready to crush everything before them—could it be possible?

Yours it can be—and quickly, too. But first send for my new 64-page book. Let me show you how such a body can be yours without risking a single penny. How my ironclad guarantee absolutely protects every single pupil. Send for it today. Get going to new health—new happiness—new joys *now!*

Send For My New 64 Page Book "Muscular Development"

IT IS FREE

Do you get that? It's free. I don't ask a cent. It's yours with my compliments. Take it and read it. It's the peppiest piece of literature you ever flashed your eyes on. And 48 full-page photos of myself and some of my numerous prize-winning pupils. This is the finest collection of strong men ever assembled into one book—look them over—doctors, lawyers, merchants, mechanics and every line of trade you can think of. I swear you'll never let this book get out of your hands again. And just think—you're getting it for nothing. Don't hesitate—no strings attached to it. Grab it.

Take your pen or pencil and fill out the coupon, or even your name and address on a postal will do—do it now before you turn this page.

Earle Liederman
Dept. 1111 305 Broadway, New York City

EARLE LIEDERMAN
Dept. 1111, 305 Broadway, New York City

Dear Sir:—Please send me absolutely free and without any obligation on my part whatsoever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." (Please write or print plainly.)

Name..... Age.....

Street.....

City..... State.....

ALL-STORY

Combined with MUNSEY

Love Stories of Every Land

Volume I—No. 3 November 2, 1929

Novelette and Short Stories:

In the Eyes of the World ..... Rosalee Tree 322
On her wedding night she knew her marriage a mockery

A China Sea Romance ..... H. Thompson Rich 339
Pirates, shipwreck and tense adventure on glamorous waters

Tricked ..... Nellie Browne Duff 354
Fleeing from love they found—each other!

A Heart to Let ..... Marge Wilson 366
Shame bowed her head when wealth was purchaser

Molly's Man ..... Marjorie Gleyre 380
It happened in Mexico

Love in Peril ..... Doris Knight Jessee 401
In the dread snake pit testing comes to two circus hearts

The Substitute Lover ..... Ethel Curtis Gaffney 432
Pride pointed the way to a truer love for Dale

Serials:

Wooing Wings—Part II ..... Clelia S. Mount 414
Between Mariel and love stands the secret of her birth

Remembered Rapture—Part III ..... Beulah Poynter 444
In which lost ecstasy is found again

Also—

Handwriting and Happiness ..... John Fraser 460
Let graphology guide you

Heart-to-Heart ..... Agnes Merion Morton 468
Love troubles solved

Choosing a Career ..... Elizabeth Wright 475
The best profession for you

In Confidence ..... Dorothea Dale 478
Social first aid

The next issue of ALL-STORY on the stands November 13th

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, and

LONDON: HACHETTE & CIE., 16-17 King William Street, Charing Cross, W. C. 2

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE., 111 Rue Réaumur

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President and Treasurer — C. T. DIXON, Vice President

PUBLISHED EVERY OTHER WEDNESDAY AND COPYRIGHT, 1929, BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY

Single copies, 20 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $7.00 to Canada and Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

Entered as second-class matter November 23, 1896, at the post-office at New York, under the act of March 3, 1879.

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission

TITLE REGISTERED IN U. S. PATENT OFFICE

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

ALL-STORY
Combined with MUNSEY
Volume I—No. 3 *Love Stories of Every Land* November 2, 1929

Love Is to Treasure

I SHALL not mind old age acreeping on
So much, if I have lived.
If, while my flesh is firmly rounded
And lights shine in my eyes,
If I have minded
The eager youths who flock about
Now and then,
I shall not care;
But to grow old and flabby,
Gray and lusterless, alone—
And not to have the glory of love's memories
Is past all bearing.
Youth, bright, expectant, to be wasted thus!
Take heed,
And live thy love-time to the full, or weep
At last for memories!

—*Ida Littell Rowcliffe*

In the Eyes of the World

Publicly his wife, privately—knowing what she knew her path must be the silent one of heart-break and despair. Until—

By Rosalee Tree

AT eighteen years of age Marna Rankin was exquisitely flawless.

Upstairs in their third floor suite, Marna dressed for the ball. Her soft, lustrous golden hair crowned her little, aristocratic head. She had widely spaced, deeply lashed eyes of cerulean blue and her childish mouth was the red of a perfect summer rose.

The maid who dressed her let her hands linger lovingly on the aquamarine velvet of the gown Marna had donned. With it went slippers of gold, the sapphire necklace John Rankin, her father, had bequeathed to her and her plumed fan with its fragile ivory stick. A comb of brilliants in the yellow pile of her hair gave her the faintest touch of maturity. The maid, a dark Italian girl, clapped her hands.

"The Signorina is so beautiful!"

Marna went to the window and parted the draperies. If she was beautiful, so was the enchanted Italian night. Opposite, lights in the buildings were like tiny, trapped stars.

Marna let the draperies flutter back into place.

And now she, Marna, was one of these vagabond roadside players! Why had life brought her such heartbreak, such despair?

"Gina," she said to the maid, "I am afraid."

"Afraid of what, Signorina?"

Marna opened her fan.

"Let me tell you," she cried impulsively. "This ball to-night—this gown I wear—everything has been prepared for a purpose. My stepmother arranged it all. She has said nothing, but I know. To-night I am expected to meet the Count d'Guvani and fall in love with him!"

Gina rolled her dark eyes.

"Ah! That should not arouse fear. The Count—I have seen him—he is handsome! Who could help but love him? The Signorina is lucky."

Marna shook her small head.

"No, Gina, I shall not love him. If anything, it will be hate. You do not understand. This is all my stepmother's plan. She wants me to marry a title to further her social ambitions. Love—my dreams—they mean nothing to her. She is plotting to marry me and I—"

Brokenly, Marna's voice trailed into silence.

"Yes, Signorina. What of yourself?"

"I can do nothing," Marna said in a low voice. "When my father died he left no estate. My step-mother is a woman of vast wealth. I have noth-

ing. Since childhood I have had to obey her every command. But this unspoken command," Marna flashed, "will be the first I shall disregard! I shall marry for love alone!"

THE guests were arriving below. Henrietta Rankin, always the social climber, stood in the doorway to the glowing ballroom, greeting them as they entered. She had invited several Americans and a great number of socially prominent Italian families. Most of them had accepted because the hero of the night was to be their own Carlo d'Guvani.

Henrietta Rankin awaited the Count's arrival with an impatience artfully masked. From her first meeting with the young man the idea of a marriage with her step-daughter had flickered through her mind. Marna would be a charming Countess. The d'Guvani's ancestral castle was in the hills of Tuscany and the family's blood was of the bluest in Italy.

The woman, far-sighted and scheming, saw other things in the mirror of her mind. Clearest of all she glimpsed the Count spending his summers at her Southampton villa. She saw herself giving elaborate fêtes and gaining much newspaper publicity. A Count at Southampton would do much to lead her into the charmed circle of the society that had always disregarded her because it knew of her secret ambitions.

Suddenly there was a stir. Count Carlo d'Guvani had arrived. He advanced through the lobby of the hotel. Henrietta Rankin's eyes brightened. What a figure of a man the young Count was! Tall, athletically built, with broad shoulders and a narrow waist, he was strikingly handsome.

Wavy black hair was brushed back from a broad intellectual forehead. His eyes were liquid-dark and expressive of his moods. His nose was classically straight and his mouth fine, strong and resolute. Viewed in profile, Carlo's features were as distinct and clearly cut as the face on a coin.

He wore perfectly tailored evening clothes. The starchy white of his dress shirt was slashed by a broad red satin band and on one point of his waistcoat a small golden pin glittered.

With a deep bow he lifted Henrietta Rankin's hand and touched it with his lips.

"Signora," Carlo said in his precise, and careful English, "I am deeply honored."

"No," the woman disagreed, with a little shake of her head, "I am the one who is honored, Count. Come, let us join the others. I want you to meet my dear daughter. I know you will be the best of friends."

Marna, closing the door of their suite, walked slowly to the wide staircase that led down into the grand ballroom.

She was a prey to varied emotions. No matter what happened, she would not be a pawn in the game of love! She was grateful for what her stepmother had done for her in the past, though her own obedience had more than balanced the score. She was grateful; but she would never marry until prompted by the dictates of her own beating heart.

Why should she wish to marry an Italian Count. How could she give up her homeland for the hills of Tuscany? There were so many handsome American men, too.

Defiantly, her head held high, Marna descended the staircase. As she reached the last step one of her twinkling slipper heels caught in the train

of her gown; she would have pitched forward and fallen had not some one stepped out of the crowd to catch her adroitly. With a small exclamation of dismay Marna looked up and into the darkest, most compelling eyes she had ever seen in all her life.

"THANK you so much," she murmured vibrantly.

The arms of the man who had caught her held her still in gentle embrace. Marna saw that he was picturesquely handsome, young and that his white shirt was slashed with a crimson ribbon.

"It is nothing," he said simply. "Nothing at all."

Marna was conscious people were looking at her, but she did not care. She saw nothing save this tall, dark young man who was smiling down at her. A strange, quivering, indefinable emotion surged through her. She smiled tremulously back at him, standing stiff and still until the sudden voice of Henrietta Rankin broke the magic spell.

"Marna! So you have already met the Count?"

"We have been thrown together, so to speak," d'Guvani said jestingly.

Marna's rose-red lips parted.

"*The Count!*"

Her step-mother's nod expressed her keen satisfaction. Already the sharp glance of the woman had taken in the situation.

"Count Carlo d'Guvani, my dear. And this, Count, is my daughter, Marna Rankin. Now, you young people must dance and enjoy yourselves."

They danced to the haunting lilt of violins. To Marna the ballroom and the faces of the guests, the music and lights, blended into one murmurous background. She was conscious only of the handsome Carlo, the caressing sound of his voice and the magnetic touch of his hand.

And then of the stone balcony that overlooked the star-drenched street that wound past the hotel.

Life was a strange, capricious thing. Two hours ago she had been prepared to hate this man who stood beside her, peering out into the night. Now, suddenly and breathlessly, she understood how deeply she loved him!

It seemed as if the whole drama of her life needed only the climax of his coming to fill it to completion. He was the dream Prince Charming whose unknown image she had locked away in the treasure-box of her heart. A delicious thrill of happiness warmed her cheeks with delicate color.

When suddenly he turned to her, Marna trembled.

"Here, under the stars, I can tell you, little white rose. I love you! You were made for me as surely as I was made for you! All my life I have been searching for you. To-night, when I saw you coming down the stairs, my joyous heart told me the search had ended. I love you!"

"I love you!" Marna confessed, in a tense whisper.

Once more his arms embraced her and their lips met in a kiss.

Below the balcony, a conveyance with a lantern that was like a star riding ahead, moved up the street. The song of the occupants came to them through the star-shine and witchery of the velvet night.

Love is eternal
Living forever!
Love is eternal
Naught can us sever—

"Is that true, Carlo?" Marna breathed. "Is this love of ours eternal? Will it live forever?"

He buried his face in the golden glory of her hair.

"It shall live," he vowed, "until the last star fades!"

BEING engaged to Count Carlo d'Guvani was tingling excitement to Marna.

Each morning she found a huge armful of roses on the table in the living room. The card attached to them bore some fragment of verse. At noon she would lunch with him and in the afternoon they would explore the streets together, drifting dreamily through the warm Latin sunshine.

In the dusk of evening Marna would lie in Carlo's arms while he caressed her, happiness like a shining sword in her heart.

She had no thoughts beyond their daily meetings and his kisses. The future was a hazy, disregarded blur. Such matters as what the Count d'Guvani did to earn a livelihood, where they would reside after they were married, and other material things never came to arouse curiosity within Marna. She lived only for the moment, the magic present, and she lived each golden minute with fullness and joy.

They planned to be married toward the end of the month. It was after they had talked it over together that Henrietta Rankin showed her first scheming.

"I have decided that you two shall be married in the Cathedral of Saint Emilo. We will have an Archbishop officiate. Your wedding gown will come from Paris—that should be good for newspaper copy back home. Of course, the cost will be a pretty penny, but it will be worth it."

They were in the living room of the hotel suite. Marna jumped up from the chair she had drawn close to the window so that she might watch the street below.

"Carlo does not want an elaborate wedding, mother."

Henrietta Rankin's small, shrewd eyes narrowed.

"No?"

"Neither do I. We have decided," Marna told her, "to be married in the ballroom of this hotel where we met. Just a small, informal ceremony attended by a few of Carlo's oldest and best friends."

Her step-mother reflected without change of expression. It was as yet too early in the proceedings to show her hand. One false move now, the woman thought, and the Count might easily be frightened off.

She decided upon persuasion.

"Don't you want a wedding ceremony that will always remain one of your dearest memories, Marna? Remember, you are to be the Countess d'Guvani, bearing one of the oldest and most honored names in all Italy."

Marna smiled.

"I only want what Carlo wants," she replied simply.

"Very well," the other agreed reluctantly. "I will see the Count and talk it over with him. I am sure he will be sensible about it."

The same evening Carlo had a private interview with Henrietta Rankin. The woman used strategy, but failed: the Count was not to be shaken. Both Marna and he wanted a simple ceremony. That was all there was to it. Even then Mrs. Rankin was not entirely frustrated.

"My dear Count," she said suavely, "I know nothing of your finances. I have arranged an ample dowry to be paid to you after the wedding. I will double it if you will agree to my wishes."

Carlo shook his head.

"I am not marrying Marna for money!" he answered, with dignity.

"In the eyes of the world you are! Come, be sensible. A sum of money such as I offer will fix you for life. You have your ambitions and I have mine. Let us merge them."

Arising, Carlo shook his head again. It was evident he was repressing his temper with an effort. Sordid matters of money were things that played no part in his life. Somehow, the mere mention of it seemed to soil the beauty and purity of his romance.

"I believe Marna is waiting for me," he said coldly. "I will bid you good evening, Signora."

MARNA was waiting—out on the stone balcony where their first wonderful kiss had been shared. She sat there alone with the stars, wondering what detained her sweetheart so long. When d'Guvani joined her and after she had yielded her lips she looked at him curiously.

"Have you changed our wedding plans, Carlo, dear?"

"They shall be as we decided."

"Then what kept you so long?"

"Your mother and I," he said shortly, "spoke of other things."

Marna drew her fingers lightly across his wavy, dark hair.

"What other things?"

"That I do not—I cannot tell you, little white rose. Look!" His mood swung from taciturnity to gayety. "Behold the stars! Only a few more nights, sweetheart of mine! Then Tuscany and our own olive-grown hills!"

Marna, her curiosity dulled, but not satisfied, let her golden head droop to his shoulder.

"I think," she whispered, "mother expects us to sail home with her. She has planned that we both live at her Southampton villa this summer."

The Count looked at her aghast.

"Leave Tuscany in the summer! The summer of our honeymoon—the precious weeks we have lived for! Marna, surely you would not do that!"

Cuddling close to him, Marna laughed. She did not notice that the balcony door was ajar or glimpse the shadowy figure that stood close to it, listening.

"I am glad you do not want to leave Italy, Carlo," she said softly. "Since the first night you kissed me here I have been dreaming of a summer alone with you! You see," she confessed, "I am so tired of the sort of life I have led at Southampton—the eternal struggle to meet and mingle with wealthy society people who are not interested in us. Oh, sweetheart, it will be Paradise in Tuscany I know—"

The dark figure stole away from the balcony door. Henrietta Rankin clenched her hands angrily. What she had heard seemed to fan into flame the smoldering sparks of hate she had known from the time she had married John Rankin and understood he loved his tiny, gold-haired daughter more than he did his second wife.

"The ungrateful little pauper!" the woman said to herself angrily. "Refuse to do what I wish! And the Count—looking at me as if I were dirt beneath his feet! Let them marry! They won't find the happiness they dream of if I have anything to say about it!"

MARNA'S wedding day was unfortunately marred by rain squalls and dreary clouds. The streets were not so romantic beneath gray skies. The buildings that by night so resembled fairy palaces were tawdry, unprepossessing places that stood in

dire need of cleaning. Even the windows in the ballroom of the Hotel Neapolitan wept with the dismal raindrops that pattered upon them.

Marna, during the brief ceremony, shut her eyes to the outside elements. She was being joined in holy wedlock to the man she loved. The beautiful words of the marriage service were being engraved upon her heart and mind. And the ring—the band of platinum—that was slipped over her white, tapering finger was a pledge and a promise that would withstand all the rigors of time.

There was a supper for the guests. Marna and Carlo left directly with what baggage they intended to take on their honeymoon flight to the green Tuscany hills. The car took them as far as the *Piazza del Roche.* There they boarded a train for an hour's journey to a small, wayside station.

At the station, Marna discovered an automobile. The Count had engaged it and in each other's arms they spent another hour. It was nine o'clock when the dark of the road they traversed was lighted by the postern lamps flanking a quaint, rustic inn.

An old-fashioned, weather-worn sign proclaimed the place to be the *Tavern Ravesto.* Carlo gently loosed Marna and made a gesture.

"Here we stay to-night! I have arranged for a suite. It will not be as elaborate perhaps as your suite at the Neapolitan, but it will be comfortable and for us it will always be the dearest of memories."

"Why, I think this is a charming spot!" Marna cried. "Of course, I shall love it!"

An old servant hobbled out to take their luggage. They were escorted into a low-ceiled, black raftered lobby where a fire blazed.

And there, as they entered, Marna heard her name spoken in wondering accents.

"Marna Rankin! By all that's wonderful! Think of finding you here!"

She wheeled around with a little exclamation. Standing there, with hand outstretched, was Allan Kettleby.

Back in the States, Allan Kettleby's family had spent their summers in close proximity to her stepmother's villa at Southampton. Allan had always paid marked attention to Marna, but she had never returned this interest. The Kettlebys, like her stepmother, were social climbers and Allan, in her private opinion, was merely a gilded idler and a waster.

"What are you doing here, Allan?" she inquired coolly.

He looked up at the slim figure of Carlo and chuckled.

"I'm bound for Rome. Lost my jolly way and put in here for the night. Remarkable what a small place the world is. Now, tell me about yourself. Are you staying here with Mrs. Rankin?"

"I was married this afternoon," Marna declared, annoyed that she should have to give Allan Kettleby any explanation. "This is my husband, Count d'Guvani."

Kettleby's flushed, crafty face wore the correct amount of surprise.

"Married! No! And you're a Countess! By jove! Little Marna, my childhood sweetheart, a Countess! We shall have to dine together and drink countless toasts to this happy event! Landlord, a table for three and wine! The best wine in all Italy!"

The Count stepped forward.

"Thank you, Signor. Your good wishes are appreciated. However, we will forego the pleasure of wining and dining and drinking a toast with you.

The Countess is fatigued. We are going to our rooms!"

Allan Kettleby opened his mouth.

"But say—"

With a polite bow, Carlo turned to the speechless Marna and spoke to the landlord in rapid Italian. He led the way up a black oak staircase and Kettleby, smiling slyly, walked down the passage and seated himself at a telephone in a room at the end of the hall.

"They have just arrived," he said, when the connection was finally made and the call put through. "D'Guvani's looks were like daggers. What next?"

"You'd better stay and see what develops, Allan," the voice of Henrietta Rankin directed over the wire. "I feel confident the notes will have some effect and very soon. Do as I instructed and keep me advised."

"Righto!" Kettleby answered.

MARNA found herself in a suite consisting of two chambers with a dressing room between. The innkeeper deposited her luggage in one room and took Carlo's into the other. He lighted lamps, beamed upon them and departed.

Marna threw herself down in an easy chair and stared at the carved headboard of the high, old-fashioned bed.

How irritating to meet Allan Kettleby on her wedding night! What right had he even to hint to Carlo that she might once have cared for him? It was that remark that had rendered her indignantly speechless in the lobby. Then her annoyance waned; Carlo had handled the situation splendidly and, after all, Allan Kettleby would be only one tiny discordant note in the symphony of their joy. To-morrow, Marna told herself, they would be on their way again with no more Kettlebys in their path.

Dinner had been ordered served in their rooms. Marna jumped up. First, she would unpack some of her luggage and change from the traveling costume she was wearing. She opened one valise and laid out her fluffy, lovely lingerie—a night robe of shimmering silk with tiny rosebuds embroidered on it and lace and ribbons—her quilted dressing gown. And then the aquamarine frock she had worn the mystic night of her meeting with the man who was now her husband.

As Marna lifted it out a letter slipped to the floor. She picked it up, regarding it curiously. How had it come there? Of a sudden she remembered that while Gina was packing a number of the guests had wandered through her room at the Neapolitan.

Opening the letter, which was written in violet ink on fine stationery in an unfamiliar hand, she read:

Count d'Guvani married you for the dowry your stepmother offered him. He loves another.

With an exclamation of contempt, Marna crushed the unsigned communication. She crossed to the fireplace where logs were burning, and cast it into the flames, watching it crackle and crumble into black ashes. How contemptible these anonymous communications were! As if she would ever believe that her husband was in love with another woman and had married her for money only!

Suddenly Marna narrowed her eyes.

There came to her, borne back from the valley of memory, a recollection of the night she had waited for Carlo on the stone balcony. He had admitted talking things over with her stepmother that he would not discuss with her. Had they been things that concerned the amount of a dowry?

Hating herself for her unreasonable suspicions, Marna stepped out of her traveling suit. The logs snapped and blazed. The last of the letter had melted into white ashes, but the thoughts it had aroused grew within her mind. Foreign noblemen, she well knew, were notoriously penniless. Could it be possible that her husband's love had been tinctured slightly with mercenary inclinations? Had, after all, the bait of Henrietta Rankin's money something to do with their marriage?

Marna pressed a hand over her racing heart. She resolved to banish forever such thoughts. She would put them entirely out of her mind and summon back the ecstasy that had dwelt within her all the past days and nights.

In the other chamber beyond the dressing room, Carlo, standing before his own fireplace, bent a black look upon the open letter he held between his fingers. It was written in Italian, by a strange hand, and had been slipped between the straps of his portmanteau —probably in their compartment on the train, for he had not noticed it before.

Beware the spell of love! Your wife married you for your title alone. Her love belongs to one of her own race.

"Bah!" d'Guvani muttered, making a ball of the letter and dropping it into the fire.

Thoughtfully, he paced the length of the hearth. Then there came a knock upon the door and the voice of the innkeeper:

"Shall I serve dinner? In which room do you desire it, sir?"

HER wedding night!

Marna sat opposite Carlo, across an antique table, where old pewter gleamed. The reluctant promise of rain had again come true. The windows were dripping and a wind sighed disconsolately under the eaves of the *Tavern Ravesto*.

So far the meal had been consumed in an apathetic silence. It was as if they both were burdened with harassing thoughts. When Carlo poured the coffee he smiled and pressed her hand, but the magic seemed lost in his touch.

"Carlo," Marna burst out at last. "You must tell me something truthfully. Did you marry me for money?"

D'Guvani straightened up so suddenly he brushed a silver spoon from the table.

"Marry you for money?"

She faced him, wide-eyed and pale.

"Yes, did my stepmother promise you any payment after we were married?"

Color whipped itself into the count's olive cheeks. His look was one of proud hauteur. Marna, like Henrietta Rankin, did not know that money was a topic her husband hated with all the sensitiveness of his highly strung Latin temperament.

"There was the question of a dowry," he began, stopping abruptly as Marna jumped up.

"Then you were paid money!" she cried stridently. "Carlo! It is not a lie—this sum of money you were to receive after you had married me!"

D'Guvani was on his feet instantly. He raised a hand. Marna disregarded both his gesture and the hurt look in his fine eyes. The strain of the day—the wedding, their honeymoon flight and the sharp annoyance of her meeting with Allan Kettleby, coupled with the finding of the anonymous letter—had taxed her to the utmost. Her imagination was ready to magnify the smallest detail. Something stabbed Marna through and through. So Carlo admitted it! Somehow, she pictured

herself going through life with him, knowing it had been a financial bargain—that she had bought him as surely as she bought a new frock—bought him with the wealth of the woman who disliked her so intensely. In the eyes of the world it was a love match, but in her own heart she knew it for what it really was—a cash transaction!

"YOU do not understand," Carlo d'Guvani was saying. "In this country a dowry is the custom—"

Marna lifted her white face.

"Another thing. That night you came to me on the balcony you said you could not tell me what you had talked about with my stepmother. Can you tell me now?"

A deeper wave of color surged into his handsome, aquiline face.

"I can—"

"Was it about the dowry?" Marna raced on impetuously. "Perhaps the purchase price was not high enough." Perverted intuition made her seize upon a correct assumption. "Perhaps my stepmother was increasing the amount to tempt you more strongly! Was that it?"

Then Marna saw the look in her husband's eyes and understood she had hit upon the truth.

"Will you listen to me?" d'Guvani pleaded.

"No!" she exclaimed wildly. "What is there you can tell me? Your very look expresses it all. Bought! I have bought myself a husband!" Marna laughed hysterically. "A love match in the eyes of the world, but a bargain counter sale in truth! Oh, how could you be so contemptible! Your love words—those nights under the stars—lies, deceit, trickery to make me believe that you cared!"

At last her barbed words stung her husband to action. Had Henrietta Rankin been there she would have known deep satisfaction. The woman, in her search for petty revenge, had counted upon d'Guvani's impulsive nature. His blood grew hot with angry indignation. To be accused of the one thing he detested and abhorred broke down the final barrier of his cool logic and aroused quick fury!

"What of yourself? If you think I married you for money, perhaps I think you married me for my title!"

An instant later Carlo could have bitten off his tongue for the statement. Marna quivered as if he had struck her with his fist. So he thought *that?* Shame and humiliation tore at her anguished heart. The room seemed to spin dizzily about. Trembling, with her little head held high and her shoulders squared, Marna snatched up her traveling coat from the bed.

She stumbled toward the bedroom door. Her husband grasped her arm.

"Where are you going?"

MARNA'S eyes burned into his. "What does it matter to you? Any place—away—from you! Listen to me, Carlo! This ends it. I have some pride left, some decency. Now that I know the reasons back of our wedding I could never live with you! I have lost the most precious thing a woman can possess—respect for her husband! Let me go—"

"You shall not leave this room!"

"Let me go!" Marna cried thickly.

At that minute a fresh gust of wind slammed one of the shutters. The crash of it in the palpitating silence that echoed with Marna's cry made d'Guvani release her arm. She was through the door, had banged it shut and pushed a chair under its knob.

On trembling legs Marna half reeled down the entrance hall of the little inn. Her heart beat madly and there seemed to be a haze over her eyes. She was conscious only of Allan Kettleby's arm about her shoulders and his suave, surprised voice.

"Why, Marna! What—"

"Get me away from here! Quickly!

Marna looked up into the most compelling eyes she had ever seen

My husband—he is coming! Quickly, Allan, quickly!"

There was a disordered, chaotic interval in which Marna's jangled nerves seemed to shriek aloud. Then she was in a small car with Allan Kettleby beside her. A black road unwound under the dazzling gleam of the headlamps. Rain splashed against the windshield and the wind howled past the windows.

Marna's head sank forward.

Her wedding night! The night of the young, happy bride! The night when every dream came true! What, Marna asked herself, had her own wedding night brought her? Realization, distress, heartache and flight.

A hard, mirthless laugh escaped her agonized lips.

While they plunged on through the dark and rain, Allan Kettleby's mind worked as swiftly and well as the purring engine of his automobile. Henrietta Rankin had promised him a certain sum for aiding her with her plan. But what was money compared with the

beautiful Marna? Marna had broken off with her titled husband and fate had thrown them together. For years, Kettleby had loved Marna Rankin in his own fashion and her aloof coolness had only served to whet his desires and create new, strange dreams that were like black butterflies in the weedy garden of his mind.

Kettleby believed that his opportunity had come at last. The girl beside him was homeless and penniless. She must depend upon him for her future. A satisfied smile dragged down the corners of his full-lipped, selfish mouth.

His bargain with Henrietta Rankin was over and done with. Marna would be his!

THE small farmhouse they came upon toward dawn was untidy and none too clean, but there was a bed waiting for Marna and nothing seemed to make any difference now. She threw herself across its colorful counterpane before the farmer's wife blew out the candle and shut the door. Her overwrought nerves and the dull anguish in her heart brought a physical weariness she could not withstand.

Marna drifted into an immediate deep and troubled sleep.

She awoke with the sun in her face. Noises from the barnyard brought back a recollection of the previous night. She shut her eyes. Carlo d'Guvani was limned on her inner vision. He stood again at the table where the pewter gleamed. There was color in his dark face, a hurt look in his eyes.

She pressed a hand tightly over her heart. She had left love and her husband! She would never see Carlo again! Her mind, shaken by the events of the previous night, ached with the burden she placed upon it.

Carlo and love—gone forever!

"Marna, are you dressed? It is after ten. Breakfast is waiting for you downstairs."

Marna had forgotten Allan Kettleby. His voice at the door aroused her to another problem. She told him she would come down and poured cold water from a cracked pitcher into a grimy bowl. The chill of it helped to quiet her throbbing temples and brought some color back into her pale, beautiful face.

Marna brushed back the golden splendor of her hair. When she descended to the lower floor of the farmhouse it was to find Allan Kettleby alone in a room where a planked table contained what was to be her breakfast. Through an open window the farmer, his wife and family could be seen distantly in the fields.

Kettleby indicated the table with a gesture.

"It tastes better than it looks. Goat's milk, cheese and bread. What more could any one desire?"

Surveying the unappetizing repast, Marna turned away.

"I'm not hungry," she said faintly. "Allan, what am I to do now? I cannot and will not go back to my stepmother—"

"How about your husband?"

"I have left him—forever."

Kettleby concealed his smirk.

"Then it seems you are more or less dependent upon me, Marna. I've been thinking it over. Naturally, I'm going to help you out of this tight hole. I haven't an awful lot of money; however, I can get more in Rome. I suggest going back to the Eternal City. From there we can get a boat and hop across to the States. Does that sound intriguing?"

Marna opened her hands. What did

it matter where she went? The States or the Continent?

"Yes, anywhere," she answered.

Crossing to her, Kettleby leaned over. His eyes glinted oddly.

"This is a business deal, Marna. I don't play the Good Samaritan without suitable reward. Understand that. For years I've loved you and have been given always the cold shoulder. Now it's my turn. I'll take you to Rome and I'll arrange for your passage home but—on my terms!"

With wide eyes, Marna considered him. Had she, after all, exchanged the frying pan for the fire?

"What are your terms?" she inquired icily.

Kettleby leaned closer.

"Your love! I've always been crazy about you!"

Weary, dejected, Marna laughed hollowly. It was too absurd. Allan Kettleby asking her love!

"No, please don't talk like that, Allan."

His face darkened.

"Think it over. It's not any joke to be broke and friendless in a strange country. I'm offering you a way out. Take it—or go back to your husband!"

The warm sunshine streamed through the open door of the farmhouse. Marna picked up the coat she had brought downstairs with her. She draped it over one arm, walked to the door and without a word passed through it. With an exclamation, Kettleby followed.

"Where are you going?"

THROUGH Marna a cruel spasm ran sharply. Carlo had asked her that same question last night. Where *was* she going?

"Go back, Allan. Leave me alone," she told him bitterly.

When they reached the road he seized her arm.

"This is madness, Marna! You haven't even had any breakfast! You'll drop along the road somewhere! You can't go on—"

"I shall!"

Kettleby caught her with both arms. He drew her close to him and she saw his lips groping for hers. With a little cry Marna covered her mouth with a shaking hand.

"I love you!" Kettleby exclaimed huskily. "You can't get away! We're going to Rome together! I'll follow you and take you there!"

The tightness of his embrace made her struggle futilely. His breath touched her face and forehead. The sun was a yellow glare. In the pouring shine of it Marna could see Kettleby's glinting eyes and the full-lipped mouth questing her own.

She tried desperately to break his hold, push him away. It was useless. Her strength was no match for his own. Slowly, exultingly and surely Kettleby pulled away the hand that covered her red mouth. Then, when she was almost fainting, there came an interruption.

A voice rapped out something in sharp Italian. Kettleby's arms fell away from her. Marna, striving to focus her dazzled, terror-stricken eyes, saw that a grizzled-headed, leathery-faced Italian had come between them. He was holding Kettleby with his powerful right hand. Back, on the opposite side of the road, stood a small, mud-smeared and dusty Ford.

"I say!" Kettleby burst out. "Take your filthy hands off me! What right have you to interfere! I'll—"

The fist of the man who held him crashed against Kettleby's jaw. He toppled over, rolled in the dust of the

road and glowered up from the ground. The Italian turned to Marna, pointing to his car.

"You come with me? I take you. He follow—" with a glare at Kettleby, "—and I kill!"

He opened his worn coat carelessly and displayed at least six ominous knives of all shapes and sizes stuck through a broad, sweat-stained belt. Marna nodded vigorously. He led her across to the dilapidated car and helped her into it.

The motor hummed. The car moved off and Marna's last glance at Kettleby showed him standing unsteadily and peering after them with a hand shading his eyes.

SHE could not guess her destination. The man beside her said nothing. An hour or more passed before they turned from the main road, climbed a hill and rolled down into a green valley.

Suddenly, Marna saw wagons, groups of people. A wandering gypsy show was camping there. Her pulses quickened when the man who had saved her from Allan Kettleby slowed the speed of the car and drove into the square made by the wagons.

People came toward her. Girls with dark, gleaming eyes and red smiles. Picturesque young Italians who wore gay bandannas. Stout, older women with hoops in their ears, small, half clad children.

"Who you got, Beppo?" a tall, slender youth asked, coming close to the car. The man beside Marna went into a lengthy explanation. The youth inclined his head. "My uncle," he said to Marna, "wants to know if you are hungry? You are to stay here until you are rested and—"

"I have no money to pay for what you give me," Marna said in a low, tense voice.

He showed gleaming teeth in a smile.

"That should not worry you. We do not want money. You are welcome. Come, I will take you to my mother. She, also," he announced with pride, "speaks a little English."

While she ate, Marna learned that she had fallen in with a traveling show. It was owned by the man Beppo who had intervened. The slender youth was Pietro and at noon they were breaking camp to push on to the next town. It was then that Marna received the amazing offer. She confessed to Pietro that she had no money.

"You come along with us," he said. "We will find some work for you. Maybe in my uncle's act. He is an expert knife thrower. Maria, she went home to Sicily last week. She helped Uncle Beppo. You take her place—"

It was fantastically unbelievable to Marna. Tormented by her thoughts, mentally and physically exhausted, she welcomed any safe refuge. When the show reached the small town at evening Marna was part of its wandering company. Her own rôle in the act of Beppo, the Knife Thrower, was a simple one. Arrayed in the gold and spangled costume that had once been Maria's, she stood against a backboard of pine while Beppo outlined her figure with knives.

It was Pietro who had convinced her that his uncle never missed the mark. Beppo could puncture the spots on a playing card at fifty yards with unerring accuracy, could flick the ash from a cigarette with the gleaming blade of a knife. There would be no danger. Maria, Pietro pointed out, had traveled with them for three years and not once had been even scratched.

Marna felt that it made little difference whether or not a knife penetrated her anguished heart. She had lost her dreams, love had gone and she would not see Carlo again. What difference did it make? That night she stood stiff and still in her bright costume while the knives pinged about her and the peasants who came crowding to the little show shouted their approval.

"You made a great success!" Pietro said to her when it was all over. "These people like to look at you. Your skin is so fair and your hair is so golden. My uncle will pay you well each week. We shall take care of you."

MARNA, while the caravans of the show moved on from one small town to another, lost all reckoning of time and place. It seemed as if her destiny had always been the tawdry, kind-hearted players of the road. Nightly, she stood with her shoulders pressed against her pine background. Nightly, shouts and applause rang in her ears and nightly, Pietro had a steaming pot of coffee for her when the show was over. They would sit there, drinking the coffee and sharing a huge loaf of bread and a square of cheese, while the camp fire burned low.

Pietro told her of his ambitions. Some day he would go to America where his two brothers were. He would go on the stage and win fame and money.

While Marna listened her very soul seemed to cry out in the night. The same wheeling stars that looked down upon them had once beheld her in the arms of love.

Had Carlo forgotten? He had only married her for money. There would be other American girls in Italy to attract his attention.

What of Henrietta Rankin? Had her step-mother returned to America? Did the woman think that she and Carlo were living in exquisite happiness among the green hills of Tuscany?

While Marna searched her ravished heart for the truth she learned that it had been purged of hate.

Always she had loved Carlo d'Guvani. Fortune hunter or not, it was Carlo who had brought the precious gift of romance to her. Marna knew that she would love him forever and that was an irony that heaped glowing embers on the fires of pain within her heart.

Sometimes at night, while the camp slumbered, she would awake from a dream of her husband. A hundred times she relived their wedding ceremony, the flight through the night and the *Tavern Ravesto*. A thousand times she was in Carlo's arms, giving him her lips, her love, her heart.

"To-morrow," Pietro said to Marna, when the long trail of the dusty road was well behind them, "we play Guido. Now we are in Tuscany and business should be good. We will have chicken on Sunday. You will see!"

Tuscany!

Marna trembled at the word that had been both promise and misery. The wagons, when twilight was settling, reached the outposts of the quaint little Old World town. The platforms and tents were erected, the red fire torches lighted and the inclosures roped off. Down through the town the crier rode, clanging his bell and notifying the citizens that Beppo and his players had arrived.

Marna, stretched full length on the warm turf, waited the hour of her turn. Violins were catching up the melody of an accordion. Out where the torches gleamed and the high-

heaped fires blazed, the good-natured, excited crowd surged. Suddenly a singer caught up the refrain and Marna's breath seemed trapped in her throat as the words of the song rang out:

Love is eternal
Living forever!
Love is eternal
Naught can us sever—

She lay there, hot tears stinging her eyes. Memory carried her back to a stone balcony above the star-drenched street. Springtime of love! The stars and Carlo and his first wonderful kiss!

SHE pressed her hands over her eyes as if to shut out the remembered picture. Love eternal—and herself—forgotten, one of a vagrant band of roadside players! Why had life brought her such poignant ecstasy and such heartbroken despair?

"Marna! Marna, it is your time now. Hurry! Beppo is waiting—"

Marna stood as Pietro came through the silver gloom. Bravely she brushed away her tears and forced a smile.

"I am here, Pietro. I am coming."

The platform was placed where the crowd was thickest. Three steps led up to it. Beppo, in white shirt and velvet trousers, stood with his glittering knives in a row before him. The crowd, as usual, gasped and was still when Marna walked to her pine backstop and stood against it, her rounded arms at her sides.

The crier announced the performance in ringing Italian. The throng pushed in closer. Still there was not a sound. Marna continued to smile, the red glare of the torch above her making the spangles on her costume scintillate and sparkle.

Ping!

A knife flashed by her, burying its point in the soft wood so close she felt the air currents it stirred. The spectators seemed to breathe as one. Marna moved her eyes in their direction. There was a disturbance of some sort in the outer fringe. A man was trying to push his way through, and Marna watched idly while the knives continued to outline her shapely head.

"Stop! One minute—"

Stiffening, Marna heard a familiar voice crying out. She told herself that her fancies were tricking her. She had brooded and suffered so long over her thoughts of Carlo that she imagined she heard his voice. Now, the man who had spoken had reached the very edge of the crowd. He was leaning over the rope, a slim, handsome figure.

Their eyes met. Through Marna ran an electrical current. It was Carlo!

At the same instant something that was taut and strained beyond endurance in her mind snapped. Blackness swirled up in a great cloud. She was slipping, falling, pitching headlong into a black pit of oblivion. The last thing she heard was a shout, a cry of fear from the crowd.

Simultaneously a spurt of pain ran through her shoulder like white-hot fire.

Beppo, the expert, had missed his mark for the first known time!

THERE was moonlight, the soft fragrance of flowers and the tinkle of a fountain in the perfumed dusk that filled the huge bedroom.

Marna opened her eyes. Above her was a canopy and at her feet carved wooden posts. She was a small, woebegone figure within the great bed. An olive oil lamp burned in a distant corner, and through the shadows a woman

in the white uniform of a nurse moved on ghostly feet.

"I have been ill," Marna murmured, "and summer has nearly gone. I know that from my dreams, but I do not know where I am. Will you tell me, please?"

The nurse retraced her quiet steps to the bed. With shining eyes she looked down at the girl who had been her patient through so many doubtful weeks.

"You are in Tuscany, at the Castle d'Guvani."

Marna nodded.

"Then it *was* Carlo that night?"

The cool hand of the nurse touched her brow.

"The Count searched all Italy. He had great difficulty finding you. There are so many little traveling shows, you see. He brought you here at once. The wound in your shoulder healed, but your other illness—your brain—has taken a long time."

Again Marna nodded. Her dreamy gaze wandered to the rich appointments of the room. She looked up at the nurse.

"I am glad. It would have been foolish not to have recovered in a beautiful room like this."

The nurse smiled.

"Soon you will be well enough to explore the castle. It is the most beautiful in Italy. Still," she added, "it would be because the Count d'Guvani is one of our wealthiest young noblemen."

"And I thought he was a fortune hunter," Marna murmured.

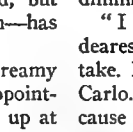
When she again opened her eyes the nurse had gone.

Her husband was beside the bed. Out in the moon-riven night a nightingale was pouring out its heart in song.

"Little white rose, can you forgive?" Carlo whispered, his hand tight over her own.

Marna looked at him, quick tears dimming her blue eyes.

"I am the one to ask forgiveness, dearest. It has all been a terrible mistake. I am going to get well for you, Carlo. I must," Marna breathed, "because I have come home to my husband!"



I'LL slip away to meet the sea,
Glad will I go, and gay,
When you are very tired of me,
Some day.

I'll keep an old tryst with the sea,
I'll make him welcome then.
I'll lay me in his waiting arms
And never wake again.

—*Mary Carolyn Davies*

They met in that sheltered spot the next morning . . . and the next . . .

A China Sea Romance

Life, love and death on strange waters. Fate that offered; fate that took away. And for two American hearts—love

By H. Thompson Rich

PIRATE COVE glistened like buccaneers' gold in the sunset. The very richest of its burnished treasures was the tawny hair of Aline Travers, who was leaning wistfully over the rail of the *Carnival*—unless, perhaps, it was her azure eyes, that just now mirrored the dying radiance of a midwinter day in the Philippines. In those eyes were reflected the rain-

bow clouds of the horizon—air castles like her dreams, and as remote, as unattainable.

Pirate Cove was remote, too, but by no means unattainable. Located near the mouth of Manila Bay between Mariveles and Corregidor Island, and sheltered from the South China Sea, it was a rendezvous for scores of venturesome craft from Balanga and Manila, even from far-off Hongkong and Honolulu.

Aline sighed. Her clear blue eyes swept the bright-hued flotilla bobbing about her.

There were craft of every kind, from sleek, costly American yachts to native boats, sampans and an occasional Oriental junk, its picturesque rigging a-glint in the last rays of the sinking sun.

She regarded them enviously, jealous of their freedom. They were here to-day, gone to-morrow. Yet the *Carnival* stayed on, a great staunch craft, moored in the cove and gaudily bedecked as an amusement palace for tourists and the wealthy natives. And Aline must stay with the *Carnival*. . . .

Suddenly her pensive reveries were interrupted by the arrival of a new craft in the offing— a long, slender cruisette, white hull gleaming pearl in the twilight, portholes already warm with illumination from within.

As it drew nearer, graceful bow cutting the still water softly, strains of music floated from its deck, mingled with snatches of masculine laughter. Now it swept close by, and for an instant she saw the tall, slim figure of the pilot—youthful, handsome in his smart yachting togs.

As it passed she was just able to make out the name *Aradus* on its stern, in gold letters that caught the last fading light of day.

Wondering where it had come from, and who were the gay boys aboard it, she followed the trim craft with her eyes, as it sped on its way to anchorage in Manila Bay.

•

THAT night Aline's curiosity was satisfied, for the whole crowd from the *Aradus*—six of them —came alongside in a tender and piled merrily aboard the *Carnival*.

It was from San Francisco, and its captain—the one she had seen at the wheel—was Keith Stanhope. The boys owned it together, they said, and were just cruising around having a good time.

An enviable l i f e, thought Aline. And she thought of the good times she too used to have, before. . . .

Then she stopped thinking of that, for she had to be gay, as a hostess aboard this floating night club, and such thoughts made her sad.

But Stanhope seemed to sense that something was on her mind as they sat together at one of the little tables beside the dance-floor, on the top deck, under a flamboyant canopy.

"You don't belong in a place like this!" he said, over the blare of the dark-hued Mindoro orchestra. "Why are you here?"

Aline shrugged.

"Why does it interest you?"

"I don't know. It just happens to."

His eyes met hers, held them. They were gray, gray as the sea, and as deep.

"Why," he r e p e a t e d, "are you here?"

She sighed. How many men had asked her that! None had found out. But none had impressed her as this young Keith Stanhope did. Still, her troubles were better kept to herself.

Yet . . .

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," she said, finally.

"On the contrary," he assured her, with a smile, "I would believe *anything* you told me!"

Perhaps it was the smile, warm and friendly. Or perhaps it was those sea-gray, sea-deep eyes. Anyway, Aline felt impelled to confide in this young man.

"I'll admit I don't belong in a place like this," she began. "I've been here only three months—but already it seems like three years!"

HER father, Aline explained, had been a prosperous tea grower in Formosa. Her parents had moved there from San Francisco when Aline was a small child. There her mother had died, and there the girl had grown up, going to the American mission school at Taiwan.

It was a happy, care-free life, and she had loved it. But as she blossomed at last into young womanhood, Gordon Travers had realized that this lonely island could not offer the advantages his daughter should now have—so he had sold his plantation and they had started back to San Francisco in his schooner, the *Flamingo*.

At Luzon, one of those sudden, terrible China Sea hurricanes had come up. The sky like ink, they had scudded blindly before the gale, to crash and founder on a jagged coral reef!

Desperately they had clung to the battered wreckage till the storm subsided, when a passing power-boat had seen them, taken them off, brought them to Pirate Cove, to the *Carnival*—handed them over to Roark Benton, its proprietor and owner of the craft that had rescued them.

Shattered by the experience, her father had collapsed shortly after being brought aboard—and when he recovered, it was with his mind a total blank as to everything that had preceded the wreck. Nor could Aline give any information concerning his plans since he had never confided them to her.

So they had waited from day to day, and from week to week, in the ever fading hope that Gordon Travers would regain his memory and be able to clear the situation.

"And that's why I'm here," she finished.

STANHOPE considered the story a moment before speaking.

"I told you you wouldn't believe it!" mocked Aline.

"And I told you I would," he replied, quietly. "I do. So please believe that the questions I'm going to ask you now are asked not because I doubt you, but because I want to help you."

"All right—fire away!"

She smiled wanly.

"First, then, have you any relatives in San Francisco?"

The girl shook her head.

"None that I know of. I was only seven when I left that city, and I haven't been back there since."

"Do you know the name of your father's bank?"

"No, he never told me."

"But surely you have some friends in the States, somewhere?"

"Daddy undoubtedly had, but—"

"Then what about Formosa? Surely you had friends there?"

"Oh, yes—many. I've written them. But it takes such a long time for replies."

Again he was silent, pondering.

"And meanwhile, this fellow Benton makes you work here? An inhospitable brute, I must say!"

"No—no, he doesn't make me," she hastened to assure him. "I do it of my own free will. I couldn't accept his charity, you see."

Stanhope didn't see, but he let it pass.

"About that boat, the power-boat that rescued you," he began, on a new tack. "It was Benton's, you say. What was it doing around here? Is he a smuggler?"

That was Aline's opinion, but she kept it to herself.

"I don't know," she said.

It wasn't Roark Benton's boat, but the man himself, who worried her—for he had shown his personal interest from the moment she arrived aboard the *Carnival.* But she didn't tell Keith that, either.

Instead, she rose now, as the Mindoro orchestra struck up a tantalizing Breakaway that was at the height of its vogue at Manila.

"Come on!" she said. "Let's dance!"

So they danced—floated along as though in a dream, rather, under that flamboyant canopy that hid the bright stars of heaven.

And as they danced, a wave of delight, of ecstasy, passed over Aline. He was buoyant, so light on his feet, for all his serious face.

But his mood soon betrayed itself in his thoughts.

"Aline," he said,—"I'm going to call you that, so try and stop me!—Aline, won't you let me help you? Won't you let me lift your father and yourself out of this—mess?"

"Oh, no!" she gasped. "There's nothing you can do, really. I—I'll soon hear from my friends at Taiwan, I'm sure."

"Well, I hope so!" he grumbled. "Anyway, we'll be here for a while yet. If you should change your mind—"

"But I shan't!"

"All right. But remember—I'm your friend, Aline."

Something tempted her to say:

"I'll remember—Keith!"

Then she colored faintly. They danced along in silence, till the music stopped.

STANDING by the rail later, looking off across the still water toward the *Araduis,* whence Stanhope and his friends had gone, Aline was startled by a step at her side.

Turning, she faced the proprietor of the *Carnival.*

"Still dreaming, eh?" he began. "And am I included in your reveries, Aline?"

"You are," she told him, quietly.

He brightened, took a step forward.

"Only not in the way you might suppose!" she added, drawing back.

"Funny, aren't you?" Benton scowled. "Well, it's time you cut the comedy and got down to earth. You've been here three months, and your father hasn't snapped out of it yet."

Aline said nothing.

"And you haven't heard from your Formosa friends, either. Looks like they've deserted you."

"It does look funny," she admitted.

"So I think you should realize I'm your only friend. Who was it saved you from drowning? My men! Who was it took you in and gave you and your father a home? Me! And what do I get for it? Nothing!"

"I—I would repay you gladly, if I could. I thought, working here—"

"You can repay me right, but not that way. You know what I want—*you!* Well, how about it? When are you going to marry me, Aline?"

As he spoke, he seized her hands, forced her to look into his eager eyes.

"Never!" she cried, struggling. "Oh, let me go! I don't love you—can't you understand?"

"Well, I love you! That's enough. The rest will come later. I've got money, kid. If you don't like this outfit here," sweeping his hand around the deck, "I'll sell it. We'll get us a fine place ashore—good as any millionaire's."

But she shrank from him.

"No, it's no use, Roark. I'm not going to marry you, ever."

"That's what you think, but I've got different ideas!"

"Don't forget," she warned him, "I can earn my living at Manila."

He scoffed. "What doing?" Then, softening:

"Why talk about earning a measly living, when you can share an equal partnership with Roark Benton?"

Equal partnership! He was almost twice her age, for one thing. For another, there was something about him she instinctively mistrusted, though he wasn't bad looking, in his coarse, heavy-set way.

"You don't belong in a place like this—why are you here?"

"Let's not talk about it," she said.

"And I say let's! Or would you rather talk about that Romeo you met to-night? Who is he, anyway?"

She told him.

"You think so, do you?" He lowered his voice to a confidential whisper. "Well, I'll tell you what *I* think. Unless I miss my guess, that guy is the 'Pirate'—and that's his gang."

Aline paled.

The Pirate! Most mysterious and

sinister character along the whole Philippine coast—smuggler, opium trader, what not! Many had felt his hand, but none had seen his face.

"Oh, I don't believe you!" she gasped. "It—couldn't be."

"All right—wait and see!" Benton said.

NEXT morning a tanned little mermaid in a brief green bathing suit sat sunning herself on a bobbing buoy in the bright sparkle of Pirate Cove.

Presently she was joined by a tall young merman, equally tanned, in white athletic top and blue trunks.

"Tag!" he said. "You're it!"

"What do I have to do?" asked Aline, smiling.

"Dive—and swim!" Stanhope told her. "Bet I can beat you to the next buoy!"

"Bet you can't!"

And he didn't.

"Gee!" he cried, admiringly, drawing himself up alongside her. "Where did you learn to swim like that?"

"On Formosa," she told him. "I've lived half my life in the water."

"You must have! And where did you live the other half?"

"In the clouds!"

He laughed.

"Well, you certainly improved your time, both places! Tell me, have you changed your mind yet?"

"About what?"

"About letting me help you?"

Her light mood vanished.

"Oh, no, I—I'll be quite all right."

"I'll meet you here to-morrow morning—same buoy, same hour."

"Maybe you will," said Aline, "and maybe you won't!"

But he did—and the morning after that, too, and the next.

And several other mornings—

Not to mention a couple of nights sandwiched in between, when the captain of the *Aradus* and his gay young crew piled aboard the *Carnival* for an evening of merry making—

By the end of a week Aline was more than ever convinced that Keith Stanhope was not the Pirate, whoever else he might be.

But Benton failed to share her conviction.

"What's that guy hanging around for?" he demanded one night. "That's what I want to know—and I'm going to find out! If he doesn't breeze soon, he's likely to find himself in bad."

"I can't see what business it is of yours!"

"Oh, you can't? Well, neither can I see what you can see in the fellow, Aline. I've warned you about him. What do you suppose your father would say, if he knew you were going with a suspicious character?"

"Please leave my father out of it!" she flared. "Poor Daddy has enough to worry about. I'll attend to my own affairs."

But Roark was insistent. "So long as I'm responsible for you here, I'm not going to have that guy hanging around much longer. So if he and his crowd are wise, they'll skip while the skipping's good!"

SEATED on the buoy with Keith the following morning, Aline said, after a few moments of gay banter:

"I think it would be better if you didn't see me any more, Keith. I—I think it would be better if you went away."

He looked at her wonderingly with his deep sea-gray eyes.

"Why do you want me to go away?

Haven't these last few days meant anything to you, Aline?"

As he spoke, he took her wet brown hands in his, pressed them affectionately. Her eyes filmed with unshed tears.

"Oh, yes, Keith, but—"

"I know! It's that fellow Benton! He's making it uncomfortable for you."

She was silent.

"That's it, all right! Well, I'll tell him something! I'll—"

"Oh, no!"

"Yes, I will—but first I want to tell *you* something, Aline!" His voice took on a note of appealing tenderness that tugged at the girl's heartstrings. "I love you, darling little mermaid! Do you hear? I adore you!"

For a moment he crushed her in his arms and kissed her full on the lips. The girl's face was radiant, but she pushed him gently away.

"I love you so much!" he said. "I want to marry you and take you away from that boat and its owner, back to San Francisco as my own sweet wife."

Aline trembled with ecstasy. Nevertheless, she answered calmly:

"No, Keith—it's sympathy you feel, more than love."

But the man would not be put off.

"Sweetheart, it *is* love. From the very first moment I laid eyes on you, I knew that I had found the one girl for me in all the world. Say that you believe me, dear."

Aline looked searchingly into his eyes and was convinced.

"I do believe you, Keith," she said in tones that thrilled with their spiritual beauty. "And I love you, too—just as much, and maybe a wee bit more."

He kissed her again and again, exulting in their new-found rapture.

"Darling sweetheart! Then we won't let another day pass! I'll get you and your father off that boat this very morning!"

But there she checked him, trying to be frivolous.

"Goodness! Why the mad rush, you impetuous boy? If I've stood it aboard the *Carnival* for three months, I guess I can stand it a few more days. I'll love you just as much—you know that!"

"But I can't bear to have you in the power of that fellow Benton. I tell you I'm suspicious about him, Aline. From now on every minute you're aboard there is going to be torture to me. Won't you let me transfer your father and yourself to the *Aradus*, where I know you'll be safe?"

"Yes, in a few days," she conceded. "I've got to get my bearings first. Right now I'm a little bit confused. Don't you see, dear?"

AFTER that Aline's days passed in a sort of golden trance. Nothing seemed real, not even their love. It was like reading out of a book, or dreaming.

But after three such days she awoke one night to sudden reality.

Keith had come aboard the *Carnival* and they had danced, under the flamboyant canopy, to the blare of that dark-hued Mindoro orchestra, and had whispered happily together at one of those little tables beside the dance floor.

But Aline had been conscious from time to time that Benton's gaze was on them, and once she had caught him scowling darkly.

Later she and Keith parted for the night. The young man stepped down into his tender and started back toward the *Aradus*.

As she stood on the *Carnival* looking after him snatches of excited conversation reached her from the deck above. One of the voices was Benton's.

"The speedboat! Circle around! Head him off!"

Oh, what were they going to do?

In a panic, she glanced from the powerful speedboat bobbing at her feet to the little tender, pushing its way slowly across the dark water.

Keith couldn't possibly reach the *Aradus* soon enough!

Now steps sounded, descending to the deck where she was. In another minute the speedboat would be in pursuit of Keith. She must do something, at once.

But what?

Galvanized suddenly into action, as a desperate plan flashed through her mind, she stepped into the speedboat, flung open the aft lazarette hatch and secreted herself in the small, stifling compartment.

None too soon, for the next minute two men leaped into the craft, cut it loose. The motor came in with a muffled snarl. They were off.

Raising the hatch cautiously, Aline peered out.

She couldn't see the men's faces, but she knew their voices. Tim Peters and Jud Clarke, two of Benton's seamen.

"That's right, Jud—a wide circle," Peters was saying now. "We'll cut in ahead of him."

The speedboat slued off to port, wove between the dark shapes of the drowsing flotilla, keeping the little tender always in view.

"Look, Tim!" called Clarke suddenly. "He ain't making for the *Aradus*. He's changed his course. Looks like he's heading for shore."

Peters looked, and so did Aline.

It was true. Keith was unmistakably heading shoreward!

"Pull around!" said Peters. "Follow him—half speed, well behind. I got a hunch—"

He paused, stiffened.

"What was that?"

Aline knew what it was. It was the squeaking of the hatch as her curiosity had impelled her to open it farther.

Dropping it hastily, she remained in stuffy ignorance of what was happening as the speedboat purred onward like a lynx in pursuit of its prey.

AT last the motion ceased, the throb of the engine stopped.

She heard the two men get out, listened till their footsteps died away. Then she ventured forth, took a deep breath, gazed upward—but instead of seeing the star-strewn sky her startled eyes beheld utter blackness.

She was in a cave!

Eerily the speedboat rose and fell, on the dark tides of this underground anchorage.

As her eyes grew somewhat accustomed to her surroundings objects began to stand out dimly in the reflected starlight from the entrance. She leaped ashore and felt her way cautiously along the rocky cavern. The passage veered in a sharp L, and she saw a glow of illumination coming from somewhere around the bend.

The sight she came upon caused her to gasp aloud.

There, in a small, arched room of stone, lit by the flash lights of Peters and Clarke, was a veritable Aladdin's cave. Bales and crates were piled to the ceiling, filled with heaven knew what.

Like will-o'-the-wisps, the flash lights swept around that weird chamber, seeking out Keith.

So Keith was the pirate, after all! Oh, it was bitter, galling. Keith Stanhope, with his disarming smile and those trust-inspiring, sea-gray eyes—a smuggler, a criminal? And after those unforgetable words of love he had spoken!

It shook her faith in humanity. Dazedly she retreated to the speedboat, scarcely caring now what might happen.

Suddenly she stopped short, cried out sharply, as she was panelled in the white beams of a flash light!

"Aline!"

Though she could not see his face, she knew Keith stood at the other end of that revealing beam.

"Aline, what are *you* doing here?"

His words were crisp, cold.

"Keith, I—"

She broke off short as steps sounded. He snapped out the light, leaving them in inky blackness.

"Quick! Come with me!"

"No, I—I'll get back!"

"You're not one of them?"

The steps drew nearer. "S-sh!" She flattened herself against the rocky wall of the cave.

"Keith—go!"

She heard his retreating footsteps.

BROKENLY she retraced her way to the speedboat, secreted herself in the lazarette.

The steps returned. Peters and Clarke got aboard. The motor started. They slid out of the cave, headed back toward the *Carnival*.

"But how do you figure he located the place, Tim?" asked Clarke. "I tell you, when the chief learns this he'll be wild."

"Wild is right!" agreed Peters. "If you want to know what I think, I think he's a dick."

Aline knew a dick meant a detective—and suddenly she understood! This cache was not Keith Stanhope's but Roark Benton's. Not Keith, but Roark, was the Pirate!

Now she knew that the power-boat which had rescued her father and herself was part of Benton's smuggling fleet! And she knew how he was able to conceal his operations—by using the *Carnival* as a blind!

Now the speedboat scraped alongside the *Carnival*, came to rest.

She heard Peters and Clarke go aboard. Heard Benton greet them. Caught snatches of his startled, angry words, as they explained what had happened.

At last the three men moved away, still talking in low, tense tones.

Waiting till all was quiet, Aline lifted the hatch, leaped aboard and stole to her cabin, heart pounding wildly.

Only when she was inside, with the door safely locked, did she breathe easier.

"I'll explain everything to Keith in the morning," she told herself over and over. "I'm sure he'll believe me. He must—*must!*"

BUT Aline didn't even have a chance to tell Keith that morning.

She swam to the buoy early, and sat there an hour or more in the sparkling sunshine, but he didn't join her.

Off across the cove, she could see the *Aradus* swinging gently at her anchor-chain. She could even make out figures moving about the deck. So obviously, Keith had noticed her sitting there.

Perhaps he wasn't aboard, she consoled herself. Perhaps he had gone to investigate the cave in daylight. Perhaps, even, they might have caught him!

She shuddered at the thought.

But no—much more likely, he was safe aboard his boat and merely didn't want to see her any more, thinking she had deceived him and was playing a double game.

Bitter reflections ran through Aline's mind. Love had come to her, swift and sweet, as she had always dreamed it would—but as swiftly it had gone away, leaving her heart desolate.

Without Keith's love, without his help, what hope was there? Oh, if only she had listened, when he offered her escape!

Sadly she dived at last, and swam back to the *Carnival*.

"Hello!" greeted Benton, as she climbed aboard. "Got a stand-up from your boy friend, I see. Well, his reputation is pretty shady. You ought to be glad he had sense enough to stay away."

Oh, the hypocrite! She was tempted to flare out the truth—but checked herself.

AGAIN the next morning, a tanned little mermaid in a brief green bathing-suit sat sunning herself on a bobbing buoy.

But though she kept getting tanner and tanner, and bluer and bluer, no tall young merman joined her there.

It was no use, she concluded at last. He wasn't coming. He didn't care. There was no hope now.

Dejectedly, she prepared to dive—then paused, heart leaping.

A swimmer had left the *Aradus* and was heading toward her with swift strokes.

Keith! He was coming, after all!

But it wasn't Keith. It was good-looking Chet Knowles, one of his friends.

"'Morning, Miss Travers!" he said, drawing himself up alongside her. "Saw you sitting here and thought I'd come over and ask if you know anything about Keith."

"Know anything about him?" she echoed, with a curious premonition. "W-why, in what way?"

"He's disappeared, that's all. Been gone since early yesterday morning. Thought you might have some idea where he is."

So Keith hadn't seen her waiting for him here! Then maybe everything was all right, after all. A great weight was lifted from her mind, only to be replaced by another. Where was he? Had he gone to that cave and been captured?

The thought was anguishing, but she had to face it.

"I think I may have some idea where Keith is," she told Chet, slowly.

She explained about the cave, and the circumstances leading up to her dramatic meeting with Keith there.

It was decided the boys should come over to the *Carnival* that evening as though nothing had happened. Then, after a few dances, they would pile into their boat and start back toward the *Aradus*, Aline secreted with them. But when well away, they would change their course, double back through the flotilla and head for the cave.

THE speed boat came to rest in an eerie realm of utter darkness.

At Aline's guidance Keith's friends made the boat fast and proceeded stilly along that rocky passage.

Now, as the cavern veered in the sharp L she had noted that other night, they heard voices.

"Hush! Someone's coming!"

Chet gritted his teeth.

"Coming is right!"

They continued—paused, as they came in view of that small, arched room of stone.

There stood Peters and Clarke, pistols drawn!

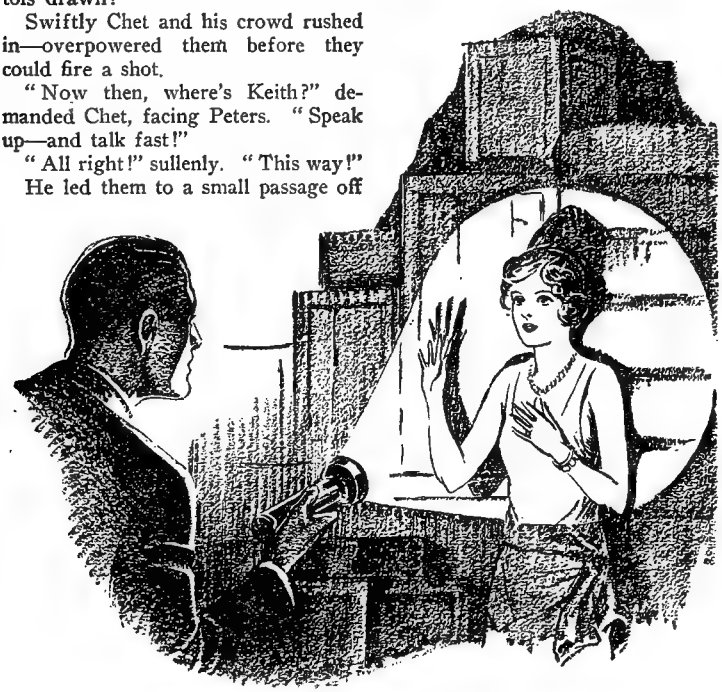
Swiftly Chet and his crowd rushed in—overpowered them before they could fire a shot.

"Now then, where's Keith?" demanded Chet, facing Peters. "Speak up—and talk fast!"

"All right!" sullenly. "This way!"

He led them to a small passage off

"I don't know what it's all about," she heard Keith murmur, as his lips met hers an instant, "but I know you're there a million, dearest!"



Behind the flashlight was Keith!

the main cavern—and there, bound hand and foot, stood Keith!

"KEITH!" whispered Aline, standing beside him hesitantly. "Oh, Keith!"

"Dearest!" he cried, sweeping her into his now-free arms, heedless of everyone. "You—?"

"She brought us here!" Chet explained briefly.

But soon he knew, for they all told him at once—

Then, when the excitement had quieted somewhat, Keith said:

"Let's snap out of this! You, Chet, see that Peters and Clarke are nicely trussed. You, Ron and Dick, help him. Come on, Aline!"

With their captives they gained the *Aradus*.

Then Keith faced Aline.

"No telling what the end of this might have been, but for you, sweet!" he whispered.

"But Keith, dear, what were *you* doing in the cave? Are you a detective?"

He laughed. "No, sweetheart."

His father, William Stanhope, was head of a big importing house, with headquarters at both San Francisco and Manila, Keith explained, and desired his son to familiarize himself with the business.

"So I borrowed the *Aradus* from Dad, got a bunch of my friends together—and here we are. At Manila I ran across the trail of a pirate that had been cutting into our business."

"Yes, and you've found the pirate, too!" said Aline.

"I've found something far more precious than that," drawing her close. "I've found the loveliest girl in all the world!"

A rush of intense happiness swept over Aline as he held her there. What joy this was, after that torturous day, that sleepless night, that other dismal day!

"We'll round up the whole gang in the morning, with some help from Manila. Can't tackle them to-night, they're too many for us. But at least you won't have to go back there. I'll see that you're made comfortable here. Martha will chaperone you."

"Who's Martha?"

"The galley cat—and a highly respectable old lady, I assure you!"

But though Aline smiled, she shook her head.

"No, Keith—I must go back aboard the *Carnival* to-night, don't you see? There's father, for one thing. And—"

"But your father will be safe, just for to-night. And in the morning—"

"But if I failed to return, in addition to the disappearance of those two men, Roark would surely suspect something and might escape."

"I'd rather have him escape than have you run the risk—"

"There'll be no risk, really. And in the morning, I'll be all ready, with father. It's the only way, dear."

And though he was reluctant to have her take the chance, she persuaded him in the end that it was the best plan.

Safely in her room, a feeling of loneliness and terror swept over Aline. It had been a brave decision, coming back—but oh, how she wished she were safely aboard the *Aradus!*

IN the early dawn Aline was startled by an unaccustomed sound—a peculiar vibration that shook her berth. At first she was at a loss to make it out. Then, suddenly, she knew.

They were under way!

In some way Roark must have learned what had happened at the cave last night. But who would have dreamed he would pull out like this? Somehow she'd never thought of the *Carnival* as a boat that could move like other craft. It had seemed a permanent fixture of the cove.

And now they were at sea, bound Heaven alone knew where! And in a thick fog.

Her plight was terrifying. What chance was there now, what hope? Keith and the boys aboard the *Aradus*—the *Carnival* gone—how could they find her in this wilderness of blue water, with its myriad hiding places among the thousands of tiny islands that make up the Philippine group?

Miserably she sat there, pondering.

At length she rose and walked to the door separating her cabin from her father's—opened it quietly, peered inside.

He was sleeping.

"Poor Daddy!" she mused. "What will he think when he wakes up?"

And she prayed, as she so often had.

"If only he would really wake up! If only that dreadful fog would pass!"

Then she shut the door, sadly, and turned back to her own cabin.

But further sleep was out of the question, so she dressed and went above, resolved to face Roark Benton and learn what he proposed to do.

He was on the bridge, and by his haggard face she guessed that he had been at the wheel for hours.

He brightened at sight of her.

"Good morning, Aline!" he greeted, with a crafty smile. "Taking the air early, I see."

"Where are we bound?" she asked, a catch in her throat. "Or am I not supposed to know that?"

"No reason why you shouldn't," he smirked. "We're bound for a little nook of mine where your pretty boy friend won't be likely to find us again and get his fingers burned. Then we'll get married."

He roared with laughter.

So Benton in some way had learned about the visit to the cove. And Aline had rushed blindly into his trap, when she might have remained safe aboard the *Aradus*, with Keith!

ALINE turned from Benton, gazed reflectively off across the rail.

The sun was rising large and red out of the blue water. It lit the bank of gathering clouds to the south with eerie lights.

A storm—but things couldn't be very much worse than they were, no matter what happened.

Within fifteen minutes a high wind was whipping out of the gathering clouds—the barometer falling, the sea rising, the sun engulfed in a murky haze.

And by the end of a half hour, a gale was blowing. The *Carnival* was wallowing sluggishly in the heavy water, lower deck awash, everything loose inside her crashing from side to side, her timbers groaning under the strain.

With her father now, aft on the upper deck, Aline held her breath every time the buffeted craft rolled, fearing it would never right itself.

Pale, dazed, Gordon Travers stood there beside his daughter, gray hair whipping in the wind, faded blue eyes peering fixedly over the rail—a tall, gaunt wreck of a once powerful man.

"It looks bad, my dear—very bad!" he said, slowly. "It reminds me—reminds me—"

The words trailed off into silence, as he groped for elusive memories.

"It reminds you of that other storm on the China Sea, Daddy!" encouraged Aline. "Don't you remember? We were on the *Flamingo*, coming from Formosa."

But he shook his head, and she didn't force him any more. So she turned her eyes off over the rail, too—beheld with fascinated dread that wildly heaving body of gray-green water under a sky of slate.

By the end of another half hour the gale had grown to hurricane force. In inky blackness they scudded along, rolling and pitching drunkenly. Benton ordered his men to throw overboard everything movable. Chairs, bamboo tables, piano—all the gaudy trappings of that floating night club were heaved in the sea.

For a while some improvement was felt, but nothing could save for long that lumbering vessel. It simply couldn't live in a sea like that. Aline

knew it and felt no surprise, but only a dull ache, when she saw a rush of men from below, heard their excited clamoring. The engine room was flooded. They could make no further progress.

The *Carnival* was doomed!

BENTON did what he could—ordered every one to don life-preservers and sent up rockets.

But what chance was there that any one would see their distress signals, thought Aline, in a storm like that? And how long could they live in such a sea, even with life-preservers?

Standing on the sharply sloping deck, she was suddenly startled to hear her father call out:

"My dear! Oh, Aline, daughter—I remember! *I remember!*"

"Daddy?" she gasped, scarcely daring to believe her ears. "Daddy, are you sure?"

"Yes, it is all clear—everything! Formosa, the *Flamingo,* the wreck—this storm has brought it all back!"

There was a new ring in his voice. And his blue eyes were no longer faded, but glowed with all their old fire.

They clung together in the joy of it, and Aline almost forgot their desperate plight.

Strangely enough, now that he recalled what had gone before the wreck of the *Flamingo,* he seemed to forget what had come after.

"This boat—why are we here?" he asked, gazing around him in alarm. "What has happened?"

Swiftly she told him about the *Carnival,* about Benton.

"Oh, the scoundrel!" he cried. "I recall, now. Before I collapsed, I gave him the name of my bankers, in Manila—told him to get in touch with them, in the event anything happened. Why, I've a fortune there, my dear! You need never have endured anything like this."

As her father spoke, a smile of bitter understanding crossed Aline's face.

It was all clear now—quite clear! No wonder Roark Benton had been so eager to marry her! He wanted that money—knew he would never stand a chance with her, if he let her know where it was.

Yes, and he had probably intercepted her mail, too—otherwise she would surely have heard from her friends at Taiwan.

Grimly they faced the rail, father and daughter—peered off into that boiling green caldron, into that whirling black void.

"Have courage, my dear!" he said, pressing her hand. "Providence brought this storm to clear my mind. I can't believe ill fate will follow."

"I'm hoping for the best, Daddy!" she said, bravely.

Her mind was on Keith while the wallowing *Carnival* was slowly sinking under them.

Oh, they mustn't be parted like this, when love had just dawned. Fate couldn't be so cruel!

Suddenly she gasped, cried aloud, as a light burst through the murk, off their port quarter.

"Daddy, look! A boat!"

Followed moments of tension, while they waited for it to draw near.

Then Aline's heart almost stopped for joy.

The boat was the *Aradus!*

BUT effecting a rescue was going to be difficult, Aline saw. The mountainous waves threatened at every moment to crush the slender cruisette against the wildly heaving

Go gle

vessel, and it was necessary to keep at a safe distance. Yet they had to get close enough to throw a rope.

The figure at the wheel must be Keith, she knew, though she couldn't see his face in the gloom.

Skillfully he maneuvered—the rope shot out—fell athwart the *Carnival's* rail.

Benton seized it, made it fast.

"All right!" he called. "I'm coming!"

But before he could make a move, she saw Keith's arm level on him, a pistol in his hand.

"Stand back—or I'll kill you!" she heard him call. "Aline comes first—then her father!"

Sullenly, Benton backed away.

Pressing close to her father a last instant, exchanging with him a look that told all that was in their hearts, Aline seized the rope and set her face toward the *Aradus*.

Hand over hand, through the buffeting waves, she fought her way—made it, exhausted—was lifted aboard in Keith's strong arms.

Then came Gordon Travers, safely.

Now Benton sought again to leave his sinking ship, but again Keith forced him back.

"You're last, captain! Let your crew come now—unarmed. One false move, and we'll pull off and leave you!"

That finished Benton. White as a sheet, he surrendered his men. One by one they tossed their weapons into the sea, gripped the rope, followed.

As they came aboard, they were seized and taken below and put securely in irons.

Aline and her father stood beside Keith, watching the procession grimly.

"This storm was lucky in more ways than one, Mr. Travers!" he said, when he had heard briefly what had happened. "If Benton hadn't been forced to send up those rockets, we'd never have found you."

Meanwhile, with a last long roll, the *Carnival* slid slowly into the sea.

SOME hours later the *Aradus* was racing under clearing skies toward the port of Manila.

By the wheel stood Keith, Aline at his side.

"Well, it won't be long now!" he said, pressing her hand.

"No, not long now!" she echoed. "But oh, if you hadn't been fortunate enough to find us!"

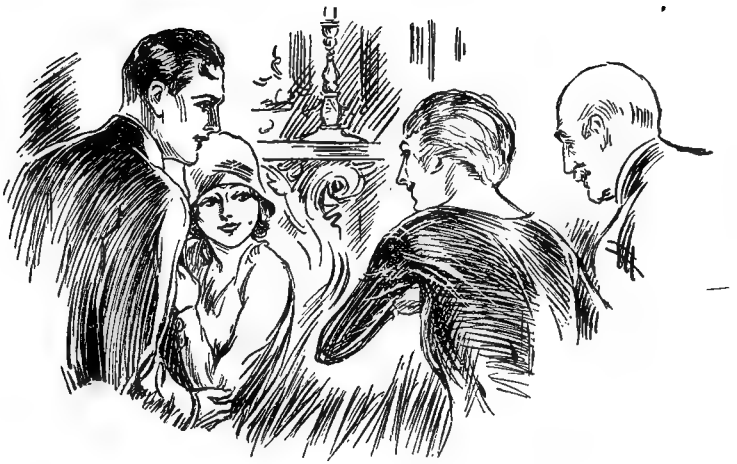
"But I did, dearest—and I'm never going to let you out of my sight again!"

"I never want you to!"

"Darling!"

His arm circled her waist. Deep he gazed into her azure eyes, with those sea-gray eyes of his. Happily they whispered together there. Their lips met.

And now a shaft of sunlight, like an omen of the joy in store for them, broke through the vanishing clouds—fell on her tawny, flying hair—lit it with a thousand coppery lights as she nestled happily in his arms.



In his arms Babs faced her parents. "He is my husband!"

Tricked

A little god shot two darts — and the most amazing marriage took place!

By Nellie Browne Duff

THE hotel had a revolving door. The young man in a hurry went through it with so much force that a girl stepping into the opposite side was whirled rapidly around and precipitated back into the lobby.

She landed in a startled heap at his heels. "My Lord!" he gasped, staring down at her. She started to struggle to her feet and he leaped in contrition to help her.

"Gosh, I'm sorry," humbly.

With feminine instinct she smoothed the disarray of her very modish costume. Then she turned on him wrathfully.

"Do you always go through doors like that?" she demanded. "Don't you know you can't slam a revolving door?"

The picture of anybody doing that, and the look of his confused and un-

Go gle

happy face, struck her to helpless laughter. His healthy young humor joined. At that instant a heel toppled off one of her shoes, and he flung an arm around her to keep her from falling. They clung to each other.

"Gee, you're a good sport to take it like this," he said. "I didn't see a soul there, honestly."

"I was standing in the corner powdering my nose," she told him.

He looked critically at that attractive organ.

"It didn't need it," he assured her.

"You know nothing about the state of my nose before you—before you knocked me down," she retorted.

People began to push past them.

"Let me get you out of this."

"But I can't walk," she demurred.

"Here, hold my arm," he offered.

"That's all I've been doing for the last five minutes. Or is it ten?"

"All too short. Please keep right on."

Her gaze began to frost.

"Lean against the wall while I collect your things," he instructed hastily. She obeyed, and he brought back the scattered contents of a vanity case and the absent heel.

Grasping her arm firmly, he led her out of the revolving door, this time in the same compartment with her. His car stood at the curb. Tiptoeing on one foot, she went across the sidewalk with him.

"But—" she began.

He interposed quickly.

"I'll take you where you can get the heel put back on," he said.

She let him help her into the car.

He drove a few blocks and found a smart bootery.

"Let me have your slipper."

She thrust out a slim foot and he drew off the smart shoe.

"Back in a minute," and he was gone.

The girl's eyes followed him. He was head and shoulders taller than she, and hard and young. All his movements had impetus and strength. His clothes were correctly cut. He was *right*.

She leaned back against the cushions and her red young lips, not all their coloring due to nature, quirked in remembrance of their abrupt encounter.

Framed by the swanky car, she made a most attractive picture. She had a skin that any one would love to touch, and a slim, rounded, buoyant figure. Her eyes were golden brown, with flecks in them. The hair curling under the smart hat was shining bronze.

His return broke in on her thoughts.

"Good as new," he informed her, leaning in to slip the small shoe on her silk-clad foot. Just as she began to wonder what made him so long about it, he finished fastening the slight strap and straightened up.

Closing the door, he went around the car and slipped into his place at her side. One swift glance at her from eyes that seemed to see much at once, and the car was in motion.

"Can I take you where you were going?" he began reluctantly. Then took the plunge. "A day like this ought to be used," he announced. "Wouldn't you like to drive to a high hill and see if there's a wind on it?"

SHE surveyed him briefly. When she wasn't smiling her eyes were serious. They were serious now. He turned and met her look. Satisfied, she sank lower in the cushions.

"Let's," she assented.

The traffic occupied him for a while, but he was skillful and swift, and presently they were miles away on a long,

climbing white road. The day was green and gold. It was June.

Miles rolled up under their wheels before at last he slowed the pace and turned to look at her.

"Had lunch?" he asked.

"No."

"Let's picnic."

She nodded.

He stopped at a small wayside store and bought sandwiches, fruit and milk. A little farther on he turned into a shaded lane that led to a hill, parked the car and helped her out. They went to a tree and sat down. He spread out the lunch. The hill commanded a view. In the distance the city, below them the silvered steel of the river. For a background the purple haze of the foothills. The hill held remoteness. Troubles seemed petty and far away. The girl was glad of the zest that had come into her day.

She took off her hat, and the wind blew trim waves into shining disarray, gold lights glinting.

"Nice hair," he commented approvingly.

"Thanks. No monopoly," with a glance at his own smooth dark head.

They fell upon the lunch with the relish of healthy young creatures.

"Tastes good," the girl said, with her mouth full of sandwich, and took a gulp of milk.

"Mighty fine," in great content. He handed her another sandwich.

"Does one's soul good, places like this." He indicated their height.

"Blows cobwebs out of your brains," was her comment.

"Were you feeling cobwebby?"

"More as though I were tangled in one," recalling the net life seemed determined to weave about her. Then she promptly dismissed the thought. No place for it in a day like this. His glance was keen as he watched the brief shadow that rested upon her face and went away again. Time the subject was changed, he thought.

AN insect landed between them.

"Aha, a cricket on our hearth!" he proclaimed.

"That's no cricket. That's a grasshopper. Don't you know grasshoppers?"

"To be sure. But I'm disappointed. I was sure it was a cricket. Made the hearth idea perfect. Like hearths?"

His eyes were intent back of his banter.

"Depends on who sits on the opposite side," and the bit of shadow came back to her eyes.

"I should never sit on the opposite side," earnestly. He had the satisfaction of seeing a flush stain the smooth cheeks.

His eyes sought her left hand. It was innocent of rings save a striking jade.

"You are not engaged?" It was also a question.

This time distaste was definite in her face.

"No. And I have no fancy for the subject, please."

"Might one inquire why?"

She made a little *moue*. Her eyes were veiled.

"It can be such a bothersome one. One's family can make so much fuss. Regularly hound one. Social error for a girl to go into her second season without at least being engaged, and all that rot. Spoils all one's fun. I've heard entirely too much about it. And too recently."

"A thousand pardons." He threw the subject away with a crumpled paper napkin. And thereafter brought sparkling things up, and her merry

laughter rang out with his own. The shadow was quite gone.

AT last he observed:

"There's more of the world."

"Let's see what they offer near by," she agreed.

They clambered up, her hands in his, and returned to the car. He guided it down the little lane and back to the shining highway.

A mile or two of this gay jaunting and a golf course lay beside the road, just outside a little town.

"Want to play? I have clubs in the car."

"Not in these shoes," smiling. "The heel might come off again."

"Wish it would," fervently. He remembered her clinging touch.

"What did you say?" with suspicion.

"I said I wish you had a pair of golf shoes," distinctly. And again they laughed.

"Let's drive into the village Tom. Maybe I can find some."

They did. He nosed the car along sleepy streets until she indicated a bright little store. He held the door open for her to alight, and she went in. He admired her very smart clothes, certainly unsuited for golf, as she left him. Then he climbed back into the car and lost himself in musing.

Her voice recalled him. She stood on the sidewalk, with a clerk holding a handsome dressing case. It evidently contained her other clothes, for she was newly attired in a flannel sport suit, small soft felt hat and distinctly good-looking golf shoes. The outfit looked springily green and decidedly fetching.

He sprang out the better to survey it.

"Who says one can't be smart for twenty-five dollars?" she invited his inspection.

"Not I, with such proof confronting me," and let admiration look forth from his eyes. Her color deepened ever so slightly.

The clerk put the case in the back of the car, and they were on their way.

The golf course proved to belong to a country club. The young man disappeared within and arranged for them to play. When he came out the girl waited near the first tee. She was making practice swings with the extra clubs he had taken from the car, and he watched her approvingly. She sent him a smile.

"Perfect golf weather. Let's go."

The caddy teed up, she took a sturdy stance, swung her club with lithe strength, and the white ball went swinging down the fairway.

"Good," he approved when it came to rest. "Now watch me."

His drive distanced hers by very little.

"We ought to play a good game," he said, and was well content. Here certainly was a girl. A peach. Play a man's games with him, and still be most adorably a girl.

They were pretty well matched, and played a thoroughly enjoyable game. They found time for sparkling talk and frequent laughter as they walked about the course. After a while they walked arm in arm. And a little later hand in hand, frankly as two happy children.

At the game's end they went toward the clubhouse.

"Five o'clock," glancing at his watch.

"We've been together nearly six hours," she said, a little soberly.

"It seems like six years," was his sudden rejoinder. "It seems there

never was any time before you — as though I have always known you, and lunched with you, and spent lovely days with you."

HE found that he was speaking very earnestly. They had halted, facing each other. Her candid eyes met his fairly. Her face was as sober as his own. Then she drew away from the moment, and with a little laugh brought back their gay, impersonal footing.

"You do your cues beautifully!"

He followed her lead reluctantly. He was loath to let that moment go.

"Shall we get cool drinks and things?" achieving a tone as light as her own.

"I want a red one," she cried, like a child demanding a treat. "I've always hunted a red drink. My throat gets very thirsty for one. I've never found just the color I mean, but I know there is one somewhere."

"It shall be done. Myself, I prefer green."

He left her on the veranda. While he was gone she took out the vanity case and did things to her lips and cheeks and powdered the small nose that had caused all the trouble. Then sat with a smile hovering about her lips and in her eyes.

He returned triumphantly with a phosphate that glowed ruby red in its tall, iced glass, and looked deliciously cool and inviting. She rewarded him with a smile of delight.

"Exactly! How did you do it, Aladdin?"

"Merely rubbed the magic lantern," he boasted. "Then I rubbed it again and turned my drink green. Here, pretty creature, take this and be properly grateful."

They rested in the cool shadows of the veranda and sipped their drinks through a delightful space. Talking of this and that. Presently they rose to go.

Their gay mood lasted till they neared the city. Then the girl fell silent. The shadow returned to her face.

It had been a beautiful time. She hated to leave it. When life could be so perfect, with all kinds of lovely things rushing at one around the corner, why must there be woes?

SHE had flung away from home that morning with a flat declaration not to come back. For at home there would be the odious young man her parents wanted her to marry.

He was the son of her father's friend and partner of the old Western days, and he had come East while Babs was in Europe and quite thoroughly won her parents. She returned to find them possessed with the idea that she marry him.

Babs was a modern young woman. She wanted to find love for herself, not have it handed to her on a platter. And if Jack Henderson were worth two sticks he would feel the same way. Evidently, however, he was entirely willing to see and be conquered.

Babs had refused to meet him. Particularly when she found the two fathers had made some sort of pact. Medieval!

Her mother had offered all kinds of arguments. The fact that Babs had been out two seasons, the importance of a successful marriage, the young man's great eligibility.

"You couldn't find any one more suitable," she told Babs. "You really couldn't. He's our sort. Terribly good-looking, and likes all the things you like. All you have to do is meet him and you'll see for yourself."

Disgusted and angry, Babs told her that a girl wants to find her own man.

To her dismay her father, hitherto her ally, had deserted her.

"I want you to be happy, goslin. That's first. You're the child of my heart, you know," with his special smile. "But this really means a great deal to me. Old Jack was the best friend I ever had. And young Jack is just like him. One of the finest. I'd like to see you settled with him."

It had been bewildering. Her life had been so care-free and happy, and then all of a sudden this creature had entered and made complications.

She had gone through this for months, until she hated the name of Jack Henderson. And almost hated her parents, with their plans and arguments. This morning, when her mother announced his coming, things became crucial. Babs had said furiously that she was going away!

"And I'm not coming home until Jack Henderson has gone back out West where he belongs. Or married some other girl."

She had made a tempestuous exit.

And had been whirled as tempestuously into the arms of this very nice young man, companion of her long and lovely day.

He turned now to smile at her.

"Through thinking?" he asked.

She laughed aloud. What an understanding person he was.

"Quite," with a relieved breath. She seemed to have passed something by.

"Then let's talk about the rest of the day. What would you like to do?"

"Go to the hotel and change first. Then see what else you can serve up. Lantern still working?"

"Guess there are a few rubs left. Give me *carte blanche?*"

"Well, not too *carte*," with her crinkling smile.

He gave her hand a quick pat.

"You're the best ever."

She felt a lovely glow.

As he drove on she stole glances at him. She liked his fine gray eyes and the set of his jaw. And the way his lips closed, firmly yet with a hinting smile in their line. She felt the quickened beating of her heart and drew her eyes away from those lips.

"Mind the curves, Babs, mind the curves," she counseled herself.

THEY were passing down the long road to the city. It lay spread out, its lights beginning to gleam —like an octopus. He almost hated to get back into its grasp. It could take her away from him, swallow her up. He might never see her again! But he wouldn't let that happen!

This day with her had been so immense. He wanted to keep its happy promise.

Then the fascination of the city rose up to catch him. Somewhere down there could be a perfect fairyland. There would be dinner—such a dinner, with her across from him, smiling, the lights on her beautiful hair. And they would dance. He wanted to dance with her. He remembered his arm about her slimness when she had stumbled against him.

The memory of it stopped the car suddenly. Her look met his, startled. Then she was in his arms; their young lips meeting. He held her tenderly and close.

After a long time she drew away.

"You're so wonderful," he said, as he released her. "I don't deserve such luck."

She lay back against the cushions, shaken, smiling mistily. He continued

to regard her. Her beautiful shining eyes smiled into his. What a girl!

"It's been perfect to-day. Have you liked it?"

"Very much," softly. "But—we're strangers, you know."

They drove on in silence.

Coming at last to the hotel where first they met, he smiled at her remem-beringly.

"Beautiful place," he observed.

girl has a right to be so lovely. Young woman, you're taking advantage of me."

"There is yet time to flee," she challenged.

"There will be no fleeing," taking her arm firmly. "You come along o' me or I'll snap my fingers and produce a club and bearskin!"

Food at that moment did not seem to matter. But they ordered. Then

She thrust out a slim foot and he drew off the smart shoe

She laughed.

"I'll make myself presentable and join you in the lobby in forty minutes. How's that?"

He gave the doorman the case out of the car, and she disappeared through those blessed revolving doors.

WHEN she came across the lobby to him later she wore again the smart *trotteur* and close-fitting clever little hat. He rose and looked at her young beauty afresh.

"It's unfair," he pronounced. "No

sat looking across at each other as though they could not get enough. The waiter set the first dish before them opportunely, and they found themselves eating with zest.

Then the music of the orchestra found its way compellingly to them.

Dancing with her was all that he had dreamed, and more.

She was fragrantly light in his arms, yet a precious weight against his heart. He looked down at her lowered eyes until the long lashes lifted to reveal their golden glow. His arm tightened

about her. They moved in enchantment.

Back at the table he reached over and took both her hands in his.

"There is the question of marriage. You didn't seem to think much of it to-day. Any special objections?"

She had need of all her cool young poise. Warmth suffused her cheeks, her eyes, but she managed a light tone.

"Special ones for special people," she managed to say.

"Do you want what other girls want out of marriage, money and clothes and jewels and everything; fine houses and social position and all the other blah-blah?"

The color was high in her cheeks, but her eyes met his bravely. For all she knew he was merely a knight in golden armor. No lands and worldly goods.

She spoke the truth from her heart.

"I would live in a tent with the man I loved, and I wouldn't live in a palace with one I didn't," she said.

His eyes glowed.

"Tell me—can I go get the tent?"

Slowly the lovely face lowered with a beautiful shyness, then her eyes came back to his and she nodded without speaking.

"Darling!" The thrilling note of his voice.

Oh, how glad she was now that she had held out against her parents, and waited for this!

Then, to his amazement, she leaned back in her chair and laughed in delicious abandon. His astonished gaze questioned her.

"We don't even know each other's names," she gasped.

His laughter mingled with her own.

"What a lark! What do you say we get married without knowing? At least last names? I know a minister who mumbles."

HE had been best man at a wedding performed by that fashionable frocked person, and had teased his friends unmercifully, declaring their marriage was not legal because the minister had not said their names distinctly. Until they pummeled and suffocated him.

"Is it a go? First names only? Mine's Bill."

Some imp took "Babs" from her tongue. "And mine's Jane," she said.

"Do we seek the mumbling minister? Right now?" eagerly daring her.

The mischievous will to do so tugged at her. Then something very lovely came into her eyes. His own misted.

He stood up.

"Willing, Jane?" his voice husky.

She rose too.

"Willing, Bill," valiantly.

He nearly took her in his arms then and there. But waited for that in the car. Their kiss of betrothal was heaven.

They drove to the minister's home. When they stopped he held her again to his heart.

"You won't be sorry? Won't be afraid?"

"Never—with you."

He kissed her, and helped her happily out.

He explained the mumbling to the minister. Their last names were not to be spoken distinctly. Neither would look at the register as they signed. A copy of the marriage certificate, sealed, was to be given to each. And it must be in a church.

The minister had seen young lovers before. And he was used to these mad moderns. He sighed a little for all the love and beauty in the world.

They made their way to the beautiful dim church and stood before its altar. With the minister's wife and son as witnesses.

From an inner pocket, and folds within folds of a leather case, he took a narrow gold band and placed it on her finger.

"With this ring I thee wed," he said solemnly. And, oddly, kissed the ring before he kissed her lips.

Tears were in her eyes as she looked at his bent head. And tears were the leaven of her lips as she lifted her face to his.

"My wife," he whispered reverently.

The little group at the altar watched them go unheeding from the church, the tall young man with his serious, tender face, the lovely girl in whose eyes was that radiant light.

"THE place I am going to take you to," he said a day later, "has only four rooms. But it has a hearth. Shall you like that?"

"With crickets or without? No matter. It will be *our* hearth," she made smiling answer. And was kissed for it. "Does it have any special location?"

"It sets halfway to the top of a mountain. The sun shines in its face and down in the valley, but back of it are shadows. Sunsets are superfine."

In her eyes was a vision of all sunsets till the end of time with him.

"I shall love it. And," her eyes crinkling, "I really can cook."

"Oh, I'll help you while we're on our honeymoon. But after that, young woman," sternly, "you'll do the cooking yourself."

"Yes, my lord," meekly.

He caught her against his heart.

"You are the most marvelous girl. And to think God created you just for me."

"He did some creating for me, too," proudly.

"Beautiful!" He kissed her most satisfyingly.

SOMEWHAT later he left her for a while. There was something he had to do, he told her.

She took the opportunity to go home and break the news to her parents. She would hurry, to get back before he returned.

Outside the door a sudden thought stopped her. She turned and looked smilingly for the number of their suite. It would be disconcerting to have to return to the hotel and say at the desk: "Please, I'm registered here with my husband, but I don't know our last name, nor how to find our rooms!"

She took a taxi to her home.

Her father and mother had been very anxious concerning her, Janssen, who had been in her family since she was a baby, told her. But he was quite sure, from her radiant face, that there was no need. She cast him a smile and went to meet her parents.

Their anxiety faded when she entered glowing. Her mother's anger took its place.

"Where have you been?" she demanded. "Fine thing to do, vanish like that and send us no word. We telephoned to all the girls and none of them had seen you."

"I didn't see them, either," coolly. "And as for vanishing, you remember I told you I was going to."

"But where have you been?" her mother repeated. Her father, too, was waiting for her answer.

Now there would be a row. But she was fortified against it. So gladly and beautifully fortified.

"I was busy getting married," she announced.

"*Getting married?*" Her mother's voice was a scream.

Babs laughed. They looked so stupefied.

"Yes, dears."

"My God!" said her father.

"Who to?" her mother cried when she could get her voice.

"To whom, mother," Babs corrected.

Her mother looked as though any minute she would burst with sheer amazement. Her father was utterly flabbergasted. Babs continued to remain silent under their bewildered stare.

At last her father took command of himself and the situation with an effort.

"Better tell us, daughter," he said.

"There isn't anything to tell, father, except that I was married last night."

"But who to?" he insisted through his amazement.

"I—I don't know," she faltered.

"*Don't know?*" This time it was he who nearly screamed. And Babs thought her mother would faint. She said nothing, only nodded.

After a long time Mr. Mason said heavily.

"We might as well take this slowly. And get hold of ourselves before we go any farther."

He looked at his wife. Understanding, she made a mighty effort. She sat up rigidly. Together they faced this amazing person who was their daughter.

"Babs," her mother said, "you are an ungrateful child. You are breaking our hearts. But I am to blame. I never spanked you. I am not sure but that I ought to spank you now. Tell us what you have been doing."

They waited for her to speak.

"Well, mother," she began, "you kept insisting that I marry, and I didn't want to marry the man you selected for me, so I found somebody I liked and married him."

"My Lord, it must be true," the mother gasped, looking at her husband.

"Babs," he demanded sternly, "who did you marry?"

"Father, I tell you I don't know," she reiterated.

"What do you mean you don't know?" in angry exasperation.

"We—we made it a little game not to know each other's last names," she answered.

"Oh, this is worse than I thought," moaned her mother.

"Are you insane?" her father cried.

"Not—not much." Then she straightened. "Unless happiness makes you that way. I really am very happy."

He searched her face and saw that this was so.

"But where did you meet this man?" he insisted.

"At the Plaza."

"*How* did you meet him?" her mother put in desperately.

"He pushed me through the door and I fell down. Then—we went away together. And got married."

"Oh, good Lord," her father groaned, while her mother collapsed in her chair. "This is too silly. Babs, begin at the beginning and tell us everything. We are your parents, you know."

AS nearly as she could she told them. And something of the high heart of youth and the laughter they two had found so preciously together was in the telling. Her father regarded her silently, listening and learning. Her mother gasped oc-

casionally. When Babs told of the scene at the church she grew hysterical. Her husband told her sternly to stop. And by the time Babs finished her story, she was sure of her ground again. They might think her crazy, but she knew she wasn't. Only one person mattered. Pretty soon she would go out of this house and back to her husband. "To have and to hold."

There was silence when she finished.

"Do you know anything about him?" her father finally asked.

"Not a thing," blithely.

"Do you know where you are going to live?"

"He said the house has four rooms. And it's on a mountain."

"Four rooms!" This a moan from her mother.

"And I'm going to cook. He's going to help me while we are on our honeymoon, and then I'll do it by myself."

They both groaned.

Of a sudden Babs was very serious, pleading their understanding of this beautiful thing.

"Mother, I love him. Father, I do, really. You would both like him. He is wonderful. And you want me to be happy, don't you? I told you I couldn't marry any man but the one I found for myself. And now I have. There's nothing to worry about and make a scene over."

She had flung out her hand, and the plain gold band on it caught her mother's eye.

"A gold wedding ring," she cried. "What kind of man would give a girl a gold ring in this day and age?"

Babs caught the ring to her heart.

"I think it is beautiful," she said.

"Now I know you are crazy," from her mother. "It's disgraceful. I don't know what in the world to do."

She began to weep.

At this moment Janssen entered.

"Mr. Henderson," he announced.

"Oh, good Lord," Babs gasped, and fled.

THE Masons looked at each other in further consternation. Then Mrs. Mason dried her eyes and reached for her vanity case.

"Show him in," she directed. "You'll have to tell him," to her husband.

Together they waited.

Jack Henderson came in, very tall and straight, and very apologetic.

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting," he said as he stood before them. He liked these people.

"We wondered what had happened to you," Mr. Mason greeted him. "But now that you are here we're glad to see you."

He shook hands cordially and placed his arm affectionately about the boy's shoulder.

Mrs. Mason gave him her hand. She still felt weak.

Their young friend regarded them dubiously. Then he smiled his engaging grin.

"I couldn't get out last night," he explained. "I was very busy. I got married."

This time the Masons made no attempt at control. For the second time in a half hour this bomb had been thrown at them. And now all their hopes lay in ruins.

They looked at him in silence till he grew uncomfortable and the red mounted in his face. But when he started to speak Mr. Mason stopped him.

"My boy, you don't need to be told what a keen disappointment this is. I had hoped it would be otherwise, but

from the bottom of my heart I wish you all the happiness there is."

"Thank you, sir."

Their hands met in a long grip.

Completely spent, Mrs. Mason sat and looked at them.

In her own room Babs supervised the packing of some of her clothes, taking only plainer garments and a lot of sturdy shoes. She directed these sent to her hotel. Then she went down the stairs cautiously, hoping this Henderson person would be gone so she could say good-by to her parents.

And stopped transfixed at the sound of a voice. Then she burst through the door. There stood her husband.

"Bill!"

"Jane!"

They flew to each other's arms, while a thoroughly stupefied set of parents looked on. Mr. Mason recovered himself first.

"Babs, tell me what this means," he ordered sternly.

"But, Daddykins, he is my husband," Babs turned in the young man's embrace to tell him.

Mrs. Mason had got to her feet.

"*Your husband!*" she cried wildly.

"Yes, mother," said Babs happily. Then: "Oh, my soul!" she cried to the young man in the circle of whose arms she stood. "Are you Jack Henderson?"

"Yes," light dawning in his own face.

"But—Bill?"

"My name is John William. Called variously Bill or Jack."

"And mine is Barbara Jane!"

They stared into each other's eyes. Then that delicious laughter they had found together swept them off in gales.

After a while, comprehending, Mr. and Mrs. Mason laughed, too. Looking into the radiant faces of these two young people who had taken things into their own hands, they saw the very end they had sought.

"Mother," sparkled Babs through her laughter, "I've married your precious Jack Henderson after all."

"And I have finally caught up with your wonderful Babs," added the young man.

HE was holding both her hands. Now he lifted them to his lips, his face serious with the beautiful awe of his marriage to her. He kissed the plain gold band on her finger.

"My mother's wedding ring," he said. "I'll get you another if you like. But I wanted my wife to be married with this."

"I want only it—always," she told him against his lips.

Memories

'TIS not the things you did for me,
But what I did for you,
That rush upon me endlessly
And break my heart anew.

—*Rena S. Travais*

The lightning snapped the tree and it was falling, reaching for her!

A Heart to Let

The wrong man offered her words on a check. The right man offered her words of love!

By Marge Wilson

ALICIA lowered her head against the blinding drive of wind and rain, and ran, half stumbling, to get away as soon as possible from the lit-up, noisy cottage a half mile back. There was going to be a wedding in that cottage; that's why it was lit up and noisy. And Alicia, the bride-to-be, was running away—sobbing, terrified, as she ran.

She kept to the middle of the black road, for fear of unknown dangers that might lurk in the thick density of bushes and giant trees bending before the wildness of the wind.

The rain beat relentlessly against her face, her eyes. Her suitcase, filled with the few things she had wildly crammed into it, was becoming a dead weight pulling her arm into aching numbness.

What would they do when they found her gone? How could there be a wedding without a bride?

Terror struck at her. "God," she moaned, "don't let them catch me!" Max, Clara—all of them.

Terror cracked a whip at her heels. She ran harder than ever. She ran into puddles of water that covered her ankles.

Once she heard a noise behind her. It sounded like a car. She looked

around, saw only utter blackness. But still it could be Max. Sneaking after her without lights.

She started running again. Her foot slipped and she fell, cutting her hand on a sharp stone. She struggled to her feet, sucking at her bleeding palm.

Through a watery, painful blur she thought she saw, some feet ahead of her, a small red glow.

She stopped, frozen.

Some one was smoking a cigarette in a car. Maybe it was Max. Maybe he had taken a short cut through the woods. And there he was waylaying her. He'd known she'd have to come along this road. There were no trains from Briarville to New York to-night. That's why she had to go to White Mare Junction. Max would know that. He was crafty.

"What am I going to do?" she thought. He'd take her back and make her marry him, and you couldn't fight the combined will of Max Stewart and Clara.

A flame of lightning lit up the sky. It seemed to give light for hours. If Max were in that car, he'd see her. She stood still, paralyzed with fright. She didn't know what to do, or where to run.

And then she saw something that made her scream. The lightning had snapped in half a tree to her right as easily as if it were a match stick.

The broken tree was falling, reaching for her. It was dark, but she knew that that tree was after her. And, besides, a voice was warning her to look out.

"Run!" shouted the voice; a man's voice.

Screaming, she ran. She slipped and scrambled on all fours. She was sure that whichever way she turned, the tree was following her. She lay in the mud, numb, paralyzed with fear.

When the crash came, a few feet behind her, Alicia was lying unconscious.

WHEN she opened her eyes again she found herself in a car. Before her eyes was a dashboard, all lit up. There was some one sitting beside her. She couldn't bring herself to look to see who it was. But when she heard his voice, she knew it wasn't Max.

"I never saw a more narrow escape," he told her.

Alicia remembered the tree. She turned her head and saw a young man. Her vision was rather unsteady, but she could make out that he was wearing a pulled-down felt hat, and that his chin was smooth and strong. His lips were clean-cut and firm and pleasant. He was very handsome.

"It's taken you only six minutes," he continued admiringly, "by that clock to recover consciousness." His voice was deep and kind.

The fact that he was a stranger didn't frighten her in the least. Looking back on this first meeting with Don Waterbury she marveled that she should have felt so secure and protected by his presence from the very first.

"And you," she said, "saved my life."

He protested: "But the tree didn't hit you."

She was too tired to argue. She looked down to see what she was wrapped in that made her chills less difficult to bear. She saw a man's tweed coat, a large, loose warm one. Kind, careful hands had bundled her into it.

He lit a cigarette and smoked while the rain beat against the windows of the car and the unabating wind howled up and down the dark road.

"If the rain ever stops," he said, "I'll be able to change that flat tire. This is what comes of accepting week-end invitations."

She remembered it was Friday night. The night of her marriage to Max Stewart. She remembered her white satin dress lying on her bed, and her white slippers and lace handkerchief.

DIMLY, as though it had occurred in a hideous dream, she remembered Clara's voice, strident, nagging: "You'll do as *I* say!" Clara, her sister-in-law, the sharp, cruel woman who was her brother's wife. "You'll do as I say!"

Meaning that when she returned from her ten days in Atlantic City with Max Stewart, the bridegroom, she'd come right back to Clara's home, and live in it. That's the way Clara had shattered her dreams for a home of her own. For the peace and solitude she had never had. And then Clara had gone out slamming the door.

"Max." Alicia had turned to Max, big, stolid, scar-faced, who was leaning against a table and looking down at the floor. "Max," she had said, "do you hear what Clara says? Are we going to live here after we're married?"

Max had looked up. Craftily. "Why not? We've got time for a home of our own." He licked his lips, and his cold hazel eyes shifted in his head. "We'll save money, that way, won't we?"

"But I can't live here!" Alicia had tried to tell him.

"What's wrong with this place?" He was getting nasty. His lips were twisting downward, to one side.

As if he didn't know. As if he hadn't known in the many months he had waited for her to marry him what it meant for her to live under the same roof as Clara. The blood rushed to her head, thinking of Clara and the million cruelties she had made her suffer. Taking her out of school and making her wash dishes and clothes and scrub floors so that she shouldn't have to pay a maid. For if Clara didn't pay a maid, and had Alicia do the work instead, there'd be more money for her matinées and bridge debts and clothes.

Clara, making her stay up until one, two, three o'clock in the mornings when she entertained her vulgar, noisy friends. "It's time for the sandwiches, stupid. Try sleeping when you get to bed!"

Clara tossing stained, worn-out clothes at her. "If you pick up the hems, they'll be all right for you."

Tom, her brother, Clara's husband, who was away traveling for an automobile company seven months out of the year, didn't seem to see what was going on. Clara was a little easier with her when Tom was home. But, anyway, Alicia wouldn't have complained. It wouldn't have been fair. Tom, after all, loved Clara.

Once, she had tried to tell Tom that she would like to have her own friends call more often or go to see them, now that she wasn't going to school any more. It was so lonely and monotonous being in the house six days of the week. But Clara, whose ears were sharper than her eyes, had come in from the next room. "So our baby," she had cooed, "wants to start stepping out?"

"I'm eighteen," Alicia had said.

And Clara had laughed. Harshly, in a high voice. "Baby!" she jeered. "If the rest of your generation is running wild, Tom and I are going to see to it that you're not. Right, Tom?"

Tom, returning to his newspaper, nodded absently. With him, Clara was always right.

Clara was right when she had deemed it fit for Alicia to become engaged to Max Stewart. She encouraged it in every way. She had been lovely about it. And Alicia was happy for the first time in her life. Maybe as a married woman, Clara would leave her alone.

Max had a good job and a kind heart. He sent her flowers and little gifts.

They'd be married. And he'd take her away from Clara. There'd be a home of their own. Peace, and the homey ticking of a clock, and books to read. Meals to cook, yes, and other household tasks. But it would be different. It would be the beloved labor for the some one who loved you.

AS their wedding day approached, Max began to change. In little ways that Alicia wouldn't at first face. He loved her; he said so.

He loved her because she was so young and pretty and sweet. He, on the other hand, was thirty-six. He had a hard face that had seen much of life all around the globe. He had been a sailor, a steward, a railroad mechanic, a garage mechanic, a master mechanic. He wasn't a sweet person. His outlook on life was grim and hard. He liked money too much. That's why he was anxious to live under Clara's roof, where it wouldn't cost them a penny.

This, when Alicia had confided to him how glad she would be to get away from Clara's roof. This, when he had promised her the little house set back among trees, with a little garden and a sundial and bird's nests. A sunny kitchen. All the books she wanted to read.

Two hours before their wedding. A bitter quarrel. He had held her wrist and twisted it. "You're starting pretty early showing a will of your own, aren't you?" Twisting her wrist until she had cried out in pain. "We'll stay here, see?" he said. "Until I'm good and ready to buy a house of my own." *My* own. Not our own.

He had let her go. She had run up to her room. The wedding dress was there mocking her. But there was a back stairway—and outside was a road that might lead her into new worlds—New worlds—

She was exhausted. Her eyes were closing. Pin-pricks of fatigue were stinging her lids, and her shock-worn body ached. She considered, wearily, that if they were pursuing her, they wouldn't stop to look for her in a strange car. Or would they?

But she had fallen asleep before she could find an answer to the question. Her small head, matted with golden curls, slipped to one side until it nearly touched the shoulder of her unknown companion.

Don Waterbury looked down at her, smiling a little, because she was so heart-touchingly young and frightened. And so pretty. He reached out and touched one of her curls.

Alicia stirred in her sleep, and moaned. A little whimper of a moan, with a sob to it.

Gently, he withdrew his hand. Then he lit a cigarette and smoked it, frowning thoughtfully.

TWO hours later it was nine o'clock.

"I was just going to wake you," said the young man. "While you slept, I fixed the tire. It's stopped raining."

Alicia looked out and saw that the sky was clear and dappled with milky-silver stars. There was a silver eyelash of a young April moon.

"I'll go now. I don't know how to thank you—for your kindness." Already, she was struggling out of his heavy coat. She found her hat, damp and shapeless beside her; she crushed it over her hair. "There's not a minute to lose."

"But can't I drive you to where you're going?"

She hesitated. Naturally, she would get to the station more quickly if he drove her there. There were fourteen minutes left to catch the nine eighteen train to New York.

"Please let me," he begged.

"I'll be delaying your trip," she returned uncertainly.

He thought of his destination; a giddy week-end house party. Light talk, light minds. Vapid girls chattering like magpies, flirting, giggling, skimming along the surface of life without ever touching it, without ever having it touch them. While here was a girl who was real, who was bucking life's forces for some principle of her own. Her face was as clean and sweet as it was beautiful. There was a curve of character to her chin. Obvious fear and dire need were goading her on to her destination, and still she could refuse his help because she feared she was imposing upon him!

"Listen," he said, "I'm going to kill two more days of my life in idleness. I'm sick of it. I don't know what your trouble is, but I want to help you. Please let me take you to where you want to go."

Their eyes met and locked.

"All right," she said. And so it was agreed he was to drive her to the station at White Mare Junction.

He had half-swung about his car—a smart roadster with an expensively purring motor—when Alicia remembered her suitcase.

"My valise! It's back there—where I fell!"

He stopped the car in a position that blocked the narrow road and hurried back to the spot. Alicia looked out over the side of the car. By the brilliant glare of approaching headlights she saw his tall, well-knit body bend over and swing up the suitcase.

"I've got it," he cried cheerfully. "Damp, but intact!" He started back toward her.

BUT Alicia wasn't looking at him, now. She was looking at the other car. The driver of it was angrily honking his horn. He was annoyed because the road was blocked. And then a voice, Max's voice. "So there you are!" Harsh, triumphant.

Alicia cried to Don who was running up with her suitcase: "Quick! He's after me!" No time for questions. Don saw her terror, although he didn't understand its cause. He swung the valise into the car, backed, and, Alicia, looking through the rear window, saw Max, who had got out of his car, running back to it, climbing in.

"He's going to follow us! Oh, don't let him get me—don't—don't—"

"Forget him. We'll be out of sight in three seconds." Don spoke crisply, his eyes glued to the road ahead.

The car flew. But still Max's car wasn't out of sight behind them.

There were but two miles more to White Mare Junction. She said this to Don Waterbury. "I know," he returned briefly. "Sit tight. We'll be there in two minutes."

The clock pointed to fifteen minutes past nine. At eighteen minutes past nine, her train would be headed for New York. She could hear it chugging in the distance, now.

Suddenly, there was the depot and the train panting on the tracks while last-minute passengers climbed into it. And Max's car close behind.

"All aboard! All aboard!"

Don had her suitcase, and the two of them were running. Don shouted to the trainman: "Wait a minute, buddy—"

But Alicia stopped running. "I can't go," she said. "I can't go, and let you face him for me."

"Little fool!" said Don Waterbury. "What can he do to me?"

They were in front of the train steps. Max's car was crunching along the gravelled parking space surrounding one side of the station. He was getting out of the car. She could see his red, anger-distorted face, and his great hands doubled into fists. A huge, lumbering, menacing figure, looking from her to this young man intent upon helping her in her need, the details of which he didn't even know—hadn't even asked about.

"I can't leave you here," she said stubbornly. The train was moving a little. And so Don picked her up, deposited her on the train platform. Then he went back and got her valise from the ground, and tossed it up to her The train was moving a little faster.

SHE stood on the lowest step of the platform and saw something that took not more than a few seconds to happen. She saw Max's hand descend heavily on the shoulder of Don Waterbury. She saw Don Waterbury whirl about. Max said something, his face twisted with fury. He tried to push Don Waterbury to one side, and mount the steps of the last car of the moving train.

Don Waterbury held him back. Max turned around and swung his arm at him. Don, who was as tall as Max, but not as heavy, ducked, and came back at Max with a blow that sent him staggering backward, holding his jaw.

The train was rushing, rushing away, so that now the two figures were indiscernible specks.

"Young lady, you can't stand there." Alicia turned around and stupidly looked up at the conductor on the platform above her.

She walked up the steps, and started into the car.

She found a seat in the train, and pretended not to notice the curious prying eyes upon her. Many of the passengers had seen how she had been put on the train, and the quarrel between the two men she had left behind.

And she didn't even know the name of the fine, gallant young man who had helped her to make her get-away.

"And maybe," she thought, dazed at the way life could tease you, trick you, "I'll never see him again."

But she did see him again.

ALICIA had been in the city ten days. And without a job. Hungry, with the kind of hunger she never before had known. She was lonely, too. She didn't know a soul in New York. There was nobody to talk to but the people whose *Help Wanted* ads she answered day after day. Some of them were kind, some of them were cruel, some of them were indifferent. None of them wanted her, because she had had no working experience of any kind.

Her landlady talked to her, but usually about the same thing. "Did you get a job, yet, Miss Kaye?" It was put as a warning, of course. Mrs. Hingston hadn't any use for jobless lodgers.

At the moment Alicia had a dollar and twenty cents in her bag. She sat on a bench in a little park in the Forties. She was looking through the noon edition of a newspaper for work and thinking, "What will I do if I don't find one to-day?"

"Well, *hello!*" A voice eager with glad surprise.

She looked up and there he was. Tall and broad-shouldered and smiling. Kind. Incredibly handsome. He was carrying his hat, and the sun beat down on his thick, curly brown hair.

Alicia was so glad to see him that she didn't know what to say. She was absurdly on the edge of tears.

"You mustn't cry," she warned herself.

He dropped quickly to a place beside her. "I knew," he said, "that if I waited long enough I'd find you again."

Alicia looked down at her fingers, and then looked up at him. "And I've wondered," she confessed, "how long it would be before we saw each other again."

"I feel as if I've known you all my life. Why is that?" he asked.

She could answer that. "Because you came into my life when I needed help most. You don't know what I'd been through that night, do you?"

"Oh, don't I? I guessed most of it. And the rest he told me." Alicia knew that he was referring to Max. "He told me how you were supposed to be married that night, and you ran away. He said, 'But she'll come back. She hasn't any money, and she doesn't know a soul in New York. She'll come back—begging!'"

Alicia's cheeks flamed. "Oh, will I?" she said. And then, quietly: "Not if I starve to death, first. I'm going to stay here—in New York—until I find work and make a go of it. I'm going to build up some kind of life for myself. Some kind of happiness."

"Let me help you," he said eagerly. "No—listen—understand me! I'm so little use to anybody. And I've never done a worth while thing in my life. Nothing I can be proud of. Nothing *real*. Oh, Alicia, I want to be your friend. May I?"

"You are," she said simply. "You've proved that. Did he," she asked, with quick concern, "hurt you that night?"

He laughed. "He had to be carried to his car."

"Who carried him?"

"I did. Oh, the chastening did him a little bit of good. It made him conversational, anyway. That's how he happened to tell me all about you. He spoke of you as Alicia."

"Alicia Kaye."

"Donald Waterbury."

AFTER that he made her eat a hot nourishing lunch, and while she ate he told her about the job that was open in his office. There was a switchboard that needed operating, and nobody to work it, because the present girl was leaving Saturday to get married. Would she take it, until something better turned up for her?

She said that she would, and for three months, she worked in the uptown brokerage office of Donald Waterbury, whose father was J. J. Waterbury, of the New York Stock Exchange, main office down town.

Three months of indescribable happiness The kind of happiness that gives wings to your feet and music to your heart.

At the end of the third month she had promised to marry Donald Waterbury.

He proposed to her in his office. She had come in to give him a message about an important phone call. She was wearing something green and cool, and her hair was like spun gold. She was small and beautiful, and so in earnest about life, and brave.

"Because, you little goose, we're going to be married to-morrow!"

Suddenly, he had circled his desk and crushed her close to his heart. Suddenly, he was saying, "Alicia—I want you to marry me." He kissed her. "You've got to. I need you. You're so—you're so wonderful."

She said that she would. She whispered it, her warm coral lips close to his ear: "I'll marry you, Don. Because I love you."

Well, it was decided. "In the fall," he said. "I will have been working for my father for one year. There were twenty-four years of idleness, practically—you can't consider polo and golf and traveling real work, you know—until last summer when dad let me take over the uptown branch of his office. I told him that in a year I'd show him a thing or two. The year is up in September. Will you like a September wedding, darling?"

"Any month out of the twelve."

"Sweetheart."

There was a knock on the door. Alicia said, "I'll go."

He blew her a kiss. His secretary,

came in. Alicia, going out, heard her say: "Your father is outside, Mr. Waterbury."

J. J. Waterbury had steel-colored hair, a steel heart and a steel will. He was looking at tickers and arguing with customers' men, and scolding a board boy because his chalked figures weren't distinct enough. He had a hard, booming voice that carried well over the hubbub of the crowded anteroom.

As Alicia passed their eyes met.

She wanted to cry out, exultantly, to him, to the whole world: "I'm going to marry Don Waterbury because I love him and he loves me!"

But J. J. Waterbury looked at her, through her and away.

Alicia thought, "How funny. He's going to be my father-in-law and he doesn't know it."

She went back to the little alcove where she sat at her switchboard and found a letter lying on her desk. It was marked "Briarville," and addressed to her in Max Stewart's hand. She stared at it, fingered it warily.

Then she laughed at herself. What harm could Max Stewart do her now? What harm could anybody, anything in life do her now that she had Donald?

SHE ripped open the letter, and read it between phone calls:

DEAR ALICIA:

Yesterday I was in the City and I saw you on Madison Avenue. I followed you and found out you were working for Donald Waterbury. I suppose he put up a flash with his roadster and money, and you fell for it and you wouldn't think of coming back to your own kind, would you? Well, don't be a fool, girl. Your little dream will end with that millionaire's son breaking your heart.

Alicia laughed aloud at that.

Why don't you come to your senses and come back home. You know I love you and always have. You made a fool of me before the whole town by running away from me on your wedding day, but I'd forgive even that if you came back. I'd do anything you asked me to. Honestly, I would, Alicia. Please write to me and tell me you'll give me another chance. I mean it this time. Clara and Tom send their love. Clara asks if you wouldn't come out to see her some week-end. After all, she's your sister. Yours, MAX.

Alicia wrote back:

DEAR MAX:

I'm sorry, but it's too late for me to change my mind. Donald Waterbury and I are going to be married in the fall. Please forget about me. We'd never have been happy together, and you know it. Tell Clara and Tom that Don and I will try to run out to see them some Sunday soon.

ALICIA.

She sealed and stamped the letter, and gave it to one of the office boys to mail at once.

"And that," she thought, "finishes Max once and for all." Then she stopped thinking of Max, and thought of Donald. Donald, the man she loved, the man she was going to marry.

At twelve o'clock, Alicia sat before the switchboard and thought how strange it was that Don's father was still in his office with him. He'd never remained there that long. She had been watching for him to leave from the vantage point of the door of her office.

At five minutes past twelve she looked up and was astonished to see J. J. Waterbury, tall and formidable, standing beside her.

His voice, cold and rasping, smote her in the face. He said, with blazing eyes, "My son has told me of his insane notion to marry you. Understand, young woman, that this marriage will never take place. Understand that, please."

He went away.

The switchboard buzzed, and Alicia stared at little lights flashing off and on, and still she didn't move.

Then Donald came in. He closed the door after him, and took her hand. His face was pale, his eyes fiery with determination.

"Alicia," he said. "Believe in me. Don't mind what my father said. He—he has ideas of his own concerning me. But by to-morrow everything will be all right. Do you understand, Alicia? *By to-morrow everything will be all right.*"

He kissed her hand. "I love you, Alicia," he said. "I've never known any girl like you. And nothing that anybody says—" He broke off. "Believe in me, please?"

"I do," Alicia told him. "Donald, you know I do!"

HE went out and closed the door. Confusedly, a little crazily, Alicia thought: "Suppose—suppose I never see him again." And then she laughed. "I must be mad," she said, half aloud.

She got up. It was hot and close in the little room. She felt the need of air. She wrenched her hat from the clothes rack in the corner and picked up her purse.

In the crowded restaurant where she ordered an iced drink and a salad in the hope of being refreshed, she met Sylvia Burns. Sylvia Burns was Donald's stenographer. She was a talkative girl given to wearing screamingly tawdry colors. She knew everybody's business, and gossip was her favorite dish.

She placed herself in the empty chair opposite Alicia and said wickedly, "Heard the dirt?"

Alicia shook her head. "Donald Waterbury's *fiancée* is coming back from Europe to-night." She looked slyly at Alicia.

Her eyes seemed to say: "Now, what are you going to do about your office flirtation?"

"Donald Waterbury's *fiancée!*" repeated Alicia, while an inner voice warned: "Keep cool. This girl probably suspects you and Don and is trying to feel you out."

Sylvia nodded delightedly. "Isn't it exciting?" she shrilled.

Don didn't return to the office that day. And in the morning, after a long hot night of sleeplessness, uncertainty, Sylvia's voice greeted Alicia:

"You're wanted in Mr. Waterbury's office."

Alicia's heart leaped to her throat, beating there. Donald wanted her. He wanted to tell her that he had straightened out everything between himself and his father. He would laugh when she asked him about a *fiancée* that had come back from Europe last night. He would hold her in his strong, comforting arms, and press his cheek against hers and say, "Darling, everything's all right. Everything's as it should be. I told you I'd straighten it out."

She walked as sedately as possible into Donald's office. But Donald wasn't there. A young woman was; she was thirty and smartly dressed in black and white chiffon and a pair of silver fox and *chic* black straw cap. She had brightly rouged lips. She was toying with a paper cutter when Alicia came in.

"Alicia Kaye?" she said in a calm, friendly voice.

"Yes," said Alicia.

"I'm Donald's sister. I'm going to be very frank with you, Miss Kaye. And brief. I came here for the simple

purpose of pointing out how foolish it is of you to consider marrying my brother. You're worlds apart, for one thing—and, for another, Donald is in love with another girl."

ALICIA stared at her, uncomprehendingly at first. Then her knees suddenly gave way and she moved backward until she was sitting in a chair. "I don't know what you're talking about," she told Donald's sister.

"I'll make it clearer, then. With Donald it's always been a case of 'new face, new fancy.' He fell in love with Millicent Downs three years ago. Both families were delighted, because Millicent's father and mine have been friends since their school days. As a matter of fact, Donald and Millicent have always cared for each other. But they quarreled last March, just before she went abroad. Now, however, there's been a reconciliation. It happened when she landed last night. Please, Alicia Kaye, be sensible and realize all this. You caught Donald on the rebound. He's never really loved you. You were something new that came along just when he was bruised over his silly quarrel with Millicent. You'll have to step out of his life."

"Why doesn't Donald come and tell me all this?" asked Alicia. The words hurt her throat.

Miss Waterbury shrugged. "That's the way he is. Donald's a charming fellow, but very weak. A little bit of a coward, I'm afraid. He's asked me to tell you all this, because he hates scenes." She got up and picked up her gloves and bag. She glanced at her jeweled watch bracelet. "I'm sorry," she said, "but that's all. Except," she added, "for one thing. You must leave here at once." She opened her purse and drew forth an oblong slip of paper. She folded it and bent over—she was very tall—and slipped it into Alicia's pocket.

Alicia tried to talk, but couldn't. She could only keep thinking, "Donald loves some one else, and he doesn't love me." It beat a pitiless rime in her brain.

"You promise to go?" asked Miss Waterbury.

"Yes." Well, of course, what was there to remain for? Donald didn't want her any more. He was in love with somebody else. Oh, Donald, *Donald*.

Miss Waterbury patted her shoulder. "I know it's a dreadful experience, but—that's life. Now, come, Miss Kaye—pull yourself together. You're still a child. You've got years before you. You'll find some one far more worthy of you than Donald. I say this, even though he is my brother. Gather your things, now, and go home. It would be awkward for you to be here when Donald comes back."

Alicia's drugged mind found a thought, and clung to it. "When is he coming back?" she asked.

"Oh, not to-day! He's spending the day with Millicent and her people up in the country. They're making arrangements for the wedding—I'm sorry, my dear. I didn't mean to hurt you—"

Alicia managed to reach home. She went upstairs to her room and sat on the bed. "Millicent Downs and Donald Waterbury." The papers would be full of it. Everybody knew of Millicent Downs, the mad-cap daughter of a millionaire father.

These people had wealth, background, social position—while she, Alicia Kaye, had nothing, was nothing. Alicia Kaye of Briarville, New York. A switchboard operator!

She grovelled in the depths of humiliation, pain, heart-sickness. She sat on the bed moaning into her cupped palms.

Something rustled in her pocket. She remembered the folded slip Joan Waterbury had slipped there. At the time, her mind had been too befogged to notice more than the gesture.

She pulled it out and unfolded it. She stared at it unbelievingly, a flame rising in her body, whipping her to life.

IT was a check made out to Alicia Kaye for twenty-five hundred dollars and signed in an elaborate backhand, "Joan Waterbury."

She looked at it again and gasped. This couldn't be happening to her! Heart balm, newspapers called it. Twenty-five hundred dollars to heal a broken heart. "You'll find somebody far more worthy of you than Donald—" A mended heart; a heart to let!

"Oh, Donald," she cried, unaccountably. And then remembered that Donald wasn't hers any more to appeal to when she'd been hurt and bruised, when her heart had been mangled and her pride torn—

She tore up the check and the pieces slipped through her fingers.

It was ended. It ended in a check of twenty-five hundred dollars torn into sixteen square pieces. It was over.

And now—what? For one must go on living. Breathing, moving, eating—

A bell jangled outside her door. It was a large brass bell with a pulley that ran down to the ground floor. When there was a phone call, or a visitor, Mrs. Hingston yanked the cord. Once for the first floor, twice for the second— It clanged twice. A roomer next door bellowed downstairs and was screamed back at by Mrs. Hingston. Mrs. Hingston was screaming: "Miss Kaye! Somebody to see Miss Alicia Kaye!"

Alicia went out to the landing, "I'll be right down," she said. And started down the steps, until suddenly she stopped. And stood there, paralyzed to the spot.

Suppose it was Donald? Suppose it was Donald come to say that he had turned the world upside down to come back to her.

"It was a mistake, Alicia," suppose he said. "But everything's all right now."

It lent wings to her feet. She ran down the stairs, with each step her hope, her belief in the love that had been theirs, mounting.

She rushed into the dingy parlor where Mrs. Hingston permitted her lodgers to receive callers. She looked wildly about the room, and didn't see Donald. For the second time in two days, she didn't see Donald, but saw a woman in his place.

THIS time, a girl really. A short, plump, black-haired girl in bright sports clothes. A girl with dancing eyes and dimples.

She arose and came forward and put out a chamois-gloved hand and said, "I'm Millicent Downs."

A small bomb burst in Alicia's brain, and the room spun around so that she had to clutch the back of a chair for support.

Millicent Downs said, "I can't blame you for being shocked. You'd better sit down. Shall I get you some water?"

Swiftly Alicia collected herself. She mustn't go acting like some wretched, hysterical heroine in a melodrama. The girls of Donald Waterbury's worlds

were cool and calm in the face of any emotional upheaval.

She took a long breath and lifted her chin. "No, thanks," she said. "I'm all right. You sit down, too—won't you?"

Millicent sat down and comfortably crossed her legs.

"Donald thinks he hates you. He hates you for taking money from his sister Joan. She came tearing up to our house this morning to tell us how you asked for a check by way of healing your broken heart. Did you do that?"

"No," said Alicia. "It's not true."

"Well," conceded Millicent, "it's commonly known that Joan Waterbury is a cat and a liar. She didn't think you were Family enough for Don. And to me, at least, you don't look like the type of girl that can be bought off—"

"I don't mean to be rude," Alicia broke in, "but I do wish you'd come to your point. You see—I've had a ghastly day—" She was proud of her outward calm.

"I know," said Millicent Downs. "And maybe I haven't! And Don!"

Don—Don—Don.

Alicia's tortured nerves had reached a breaking point. "Maybe," she said, "Don sent you here to find out if it was true about the check. Was that it? Tell me, Miss Downs—was that it?"

Millicent Downs laughed. She had a bright, warm laugh. "I really shouldn't laugh," she said, "I've got so many troubles of my own. But to come to the point, check or no check, that part of it doesn't matter any more."

And she pulled off her left glove and revealed a ring. A marriage ring. It danced, glittering and round, toward Alicia through a mist of pain.

Alicia arose. "Congratulations," she said. "And—is this all?" She flung it at Millicent Downs, bitterly.

"Thanks. I'm glad somebody offers me good wishes."

"And I hope," said Alicia, "that in spite of everything, you and Don will be happy."

Millicent Downs looked up puzzled. "Don and I?" she repeated. "But, my dear, I'm not married to Don. That's the whole point of the thing. I married Bert Taylor in Europe. He's landing day after to-morrow. And my family's fuming because he hasn't much money. They want my marriage annulled. They can't understand that I love him and that I don't love Don. We broke off last Spring. We really weren't ever engaged. It was only that our families wanted us to be. And I return from Europe, a married woman if you please, and the family have a date all set for my marriage to Don. It's mad. Perfectly mad."

NOT married to Don! Not loved by Don!

Alicia's hand was fluttering at her throat. She had a mad impulse to sing, to cry, to dance— The door bell rang. Neither noticed it.

"And everything would have been fine, if Joan hadn't messed things up by lying about you. I left them up at our house arguing, quarreling. But I had an idea that there were a few things I wanted to find out for myself. So I called Don's office and got your home address. And Alicia, my good girl, if you'd see Don and talk things over with him, and tell him it's a lie about the check—"

She broke off and opened her eyes wide.

"Don!" she gasped.

But Don wasn't looking at her. He

was looking at Alicia. He was holding out his arms.

"Alicia!" he said.

"Don!"

"I've acted abominably. I let Joan almost convince me that you accepted that check—but finally I bullied her into telling the truth—"

She walked three steps nearer him. "I acted worse. I believed her when she said that you didn't want me any more." She crept into his arms.

Millicent walked out of the house. But, of course, Alicia and Don didn't hear her go.

"I'll have to break our September wedding date," Don was saying.

"That's too bad," said Alicia.

"Because we're going to be married," he added, "to-morrow."

Surrender

LORD of my life—come, tear away my pride,
For I am yours, all yours. You've wrought the change
In my vain self. Now draw the veils aside
And find in me this ardor, sweet and strange,
Which penetrates my being like a flame.
Once from your dear, hurt eyes I turned away,
Left you to bear my scorn in lonely shame,
Nor dreamed that love would be like this some day.

Lord of my life—I give myself to you
Despite my one-time lofty argument
Against your passion. Insight, tempered true,
Now counts the hours without you bitter spent.
Here, in your arms I'll stay till worlds grow old
And all the days of endless time are told.

—*Alice A. Keen*

Molly stood rooted, too thrilled to be afraid

Hot blood under the tropic sun of Mexico—cool blue Northern eyes behind barred windows — though all the world stand between, a man must find his maid!

Molly's Man

By Marjorie Gleyre

TO Molly Marston, just back from school in the United States, Mexico City possessed a romantic fascination which her mother's complaints failed to diminish.

"Isn't it dear and exciting?" exclaimed Molly with enthusiasm, as they wandered through the *Portal de los Mercaderes,* where the shops were. "I'm so glad daddy was sent here as vice consul. I know I'm going to love it!" She indicated the posters that decorated the arches. "Aren't those colors gorgeous? Oh, mother, look! There's an announcement of a bull-fight; we must go!"

"*You* can go if your dad will take you, but *I* positively refuse to countenance anything so barbarous."

In spite of this Molly giggled and took a few little jazz steps of utter delight.

"Maybe I can get some souvenirs for the girls here," she was saying when there was a stir in the crowd, a murmur of acclaim, and all attention

seemed to be directed to a group just entering the arcade from the *Avenida de San Francisco.*

The center of attention was a man of average height, powerfully built, and from a distance dark like most of the Mexicans. His squat black hat, ruffled waistcoat set with yellow-gold studs, tight-fitting jacket, and trousers that clung like a ballet dancer's tights about his upper leg and fell into wrinkles above his shoe tops, made him resemble a musical comedy star. He walked with utter unconcern of the excited attention he was creating, seeming conscious only of the conversation of his companions.

"That's one of those horrid bullfighters," said Mrs. Marston. "It's ridiculous the fuss these people make over them."

"It ees *El Misterio!*" said the shopkeeper eagerly in broken English.

"Is that his name?" asked Molly curiously.

"No one know him name. He *misterio*—unknown! He greatest *torero* to-day," explained the Mexican in a tone of awed admiration.

"How romantic!" sighed Molly. "Maybe he's a Mexican prince in disguise."

"Don't be silly, Molly!" snapped her mother. "There aren't any Mexican princes. And the sooner you get rid of your romantic notions the better."

But Molly could not keep her eyes off *El Misterio.* He had nice features, certainly not the face of a *peón,* and as he came closer she could see the muscles rippling under his tight-fitting costume. She could not but respond to the glamour of his attire and his vocation.

"Molly!" whispered her mother sharply, "keep your eyes off that Mexican bullfighter. You can't do that here without getting into trouble. The men are terrible—the way they go after the girls. That's why no nice young girl ever goes out alone. This isn't Long Island."

Just as Mrs. Marston finished her whispered lecture there was an uproar at the end of the *Portal.* Shouts and shrieks of terror filled the air, while people tumbled over each other in a wild stampede.

"Why, what—" began Molly, thinking that Mexicans were certainly an hysterical people.

And then she saw what was happening and blanched with fear.

A bull was at large! He must have escaped on his way to the corral and stormed through numerous streets in his frightened course, leaving consternation and disaster behind him. No one had the temerity to face him and try to check his destructive progress. And now, utterly crazed by fear, he was ready to toss and gore anything that blocked his path.

AS Molly caught sight of him, he attacked a burro that was standing in his way, and then tossed a man who had stumbled in his flight. Molly fancied that she heard his angry snorts above the screams of utter terror that resounded through the *Portal* as people pushed and crowded into the doorways, trampling over each other in their frenzied rush for safety. A piercing shriek in her ear indicated that Mrs. Marston was aware of what was happening.

"Into the store, mother!" she cried, giving her a shove through the doorway.

As she was about to follow, a tug at her shawl swung her about—to face *El Misterio!*

In the excitement she had not seen

him approach. Without ceremony he snatched the red shawl from her, grabbed a huge dagger from a booth, and pranced toward the enraged bull in the space cleared by the fleeing crowd.

Immediately a hush fell over all, and now the bull's furious snorts were plainly heard. To Molly's fertile imagination he seemed to be emitting spurts of fire. *El Misterio* swung the shawl in the technique of the bull ring as he approached, and the beast was at once attracted by it. As he lunged *El Misterio* threw the cape, smothering his face. Twice this was repeated, while a murmur of approbation began to rise and swell among the populace.

Molly stood rooted to the spot, too thrilled to be afraid! She held her breath in sheer excitement while the *torero* maneuvered to get the bull in his power. At last, luring the beast into a favorable position, he plunged the knife deep into his neck.

The people swarmed around the vanquished animal, shouting praise to "El Misterio." But Molly saw the hero slip through the crowd in the confusion and clamor and come toward her. She, who had but watched, was trembling in every limb, while he appeared unshaken.

"Thank you!" he said with scarcely any foreign accent, and replaced the shawl about her shoulders. As he did so his eyes met hers squarely and held them for a throbbing moment. Then he grasped her hand and pressed it to his lips. The next moment he had vanished, while the crowd shouted "El Misterio! El Misterio!" and looked for him in vain.

Molly stood quietly, staring at the hand he had kissed, and thinking of his eyes. What had she read in them? Admiration, certainly; but something else— Something which, she fancied, knights of old had in their glances for their ladies fair.

Suddenly a surprising thought came to her as she recalled his eyes on hers —they were blue, his eyes, deep tempestuous blue in his face of olive tan! How extraordinary!

MOLLY, with the characteristic independence of the American girl—admirable but not always discreet—scoffed at her parents' objections to allowing her to go out alone.

"You've been here so long you've absorbed those antediluvian Mexican notions," she told her father. "Now I've just come, bringing a sane, unbiased viewpoint—"

"Just the same," her dad interrupted with scant ceremony, "you are not to go out alone!"

He thought that settled the matter; but not so Molly. Late one afternoon she stole away and made her way to the *Avenida de San Francisco* to do some quite unnecessary shopping. But long before she reached her destination she began to wonder if perhaps there had been something in her father's warning after all.

It seemed that at every street corner there was a man with nothing to do but watch for girls. They all looked menacing to Molly, with their dark skin, their sombreros pulled down over their eyes, and their *serapes* folded across one shoulder. She wondered, with an inward shudder, if they were bandits, and might abduct her.

At the last corner a man flashed a white-toothed smile at her, and though she hurried on, ignoring him, he slouched along behind her. She did not dare turn around and look, but she could see his reflection in the store windows as she passed, and knew he was

close behind. So she ducked into a store, sped up and down the aisles in a tangled maze, and finally ventured to stop and reconnoiter. He was gone. She laughed to herself at her fears, then, and went about her shopping with zest.

But when she came out of the store she found the same man standing on the step waiting for her!

What could she do? If she went back into the store and phoned home for some one to come and meet her, she would never hear the end of it! As she stood undecided, her cheeks burning with annoyance, she saw a taxi rolling by, and quickly snapped her fingers in a signal to the driver. He drew up to the curb and she hurried over, but as she opened the door, she felt the lounger at her elbow with his toothful smile. A glance at the driver showed her that she need expect no help from him; he was staring ahead with stony unconcern.

Tears stung Molly's eyes at her own helplessness. The only thing seemed to be to jump into the taxi and try to slam the door in the face of her pursuer. So she stumbled in, but he held the door so she could not close it, and started to follow her.

Just as she thought she was going to faint from fright, a hand reached out from nowhere and jerked the *lagartizo* off by his collar, at the same time slamming the taxi door. And then Molly got a glimpse of her rescuer, for he leaned in the window to speak to her.

It was *El Misterio!*

"You must not come out alone," he warned her, gazing warmly into her eyes, and added so softly that she could not be really sure he had said it, "I would like to protect you, beautiful lady!"

Their gaze clung until the cab started and bore her away.

She was left with a consciousness of melting blue eyes that had said many things. The most famous *torero* of the day. In her eyes he was a hero—*her* hero!

THE next afternoon at twilight Molly was lured out onto her balcony by the metal-tongued muezzins calling the devotees to vespers and to prayer. This was one of the old streets, and the buildings were built after the Spanish-Moorish type; many of them had their outer walls whitewashed and decorated in blues and pinks and brightly colored Pompeiian scenes. It gave the little street a gay, colorful appearance. Like her own house, the others had balconies on the second floor, and great double doors of wood, heavily studded with huge iron or bronze bosses on the street floor. There were smaller doors cut in the large one, which were perforated by small grilles of iron, through which strangers could be scrutinized before being admitted.

Now, as Molly looked down the street she saw a familiar figure — at least, the costume was familiar. It was the distinctive dress of the *torero* when outside the circus, and her heart beat faster at the sight. It might be *El Misterio!* At the corner the figure turned and started back along the street with a measured tread, as if he were walking without any special purpose.

As he approached she thrilled to see that it was, indeed, her hero—and that his attention was directed to her balcony! In trepidation at this discovery she could not decide whether to withdraw or to stay and pretend she had not seen him. Before she had made up her mind he had come opposite, sol-

emnly lifted his hat, and then flashed her a gleaming smile. The next moment he walked on, leaving her confused.

Was it merely an accident, his passing through her street and seeing her? Or was it deliberate, according to the Mexican custom of courting, which was still more or less in vogue? When a man of Mexico discovers a maiden who looks fair to him, he seeks her house, walks by day after day, and finally obtains an introduction to her father and requests her hand. Molly knew that to be the accepted procedure, but it was so different from the way things were done at home that she could scarcely believe it had happened.

The next day he came again!

This time she smiled back, just a little, and let her hand flutter from its resting place on the balcony rail in what might be considered an answering greeting. Then she rushed back into the house to look guiltily around and make sure no one had seen her. She could well imagine the expostulations she would bring on her head if she were seen "flirting" with the Mexican bullfighter!

After that it became a regular custom—this daily exchange of greeting. Their smiles became less formal, and their eyes spoke volumes. *El Misterio's* blue eyes could strike fire from Molly's hazel ones easily! This balcony courting fascinated her; and the knowledge that her parents would most certainly put a stop to it, if they knew about it, added spice to the adventure.

ONE day *El Misterio* stopped opposite the house, crossed the street, and spoke to her softly.

"What is your name, beautiful lady?" he asked, doffing his hat and holding it over his heart.

She put her finger to her lips, enjoining caution lest they be overheard.

"But I must speak with you!" he insisted. Then indicating the iron *reja* in the door below: "Come down, please," he importuned.

She hesitated for only a moment. Tiptoeing through the house and down the stairs, she ran across the *patio* and pressed her face close to the *reja*.

"Ah!" he said in a long-drawn breath of satisfaction, "at last I can really look at you." His surprisingly blue eyes studied her face closely.

"My name is Molly Marston," she offered.

"You may call me Juan."

"I have wanted to thank you for saving me from that awkward situation, for a long time," she said stumblingly.

"You must never go out unescorted," he chided. "Are you coming to see me in the ring next Sunday?"

"Of course! I wouldn't miss it for anything."

With a fine disregard for Mexican convention, she opened the door and admitted him to the *patio*.

They sat down on a bench at a decorous distance from each other.

"You speak English very well," she complimented him.

"I studied it in your country," he said with an enigmatical smile. "I was to be a lawyer."

"Then why—how did you get into bullfighting?" she asked, bewildered.

Again he smiled, but she fancied that a veil dropped over his eyes, making them unreadable, masking something.

"The whole course of my life was quite suddenly changed by — a disappointment," he returned quietly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in ready sympathy, her eyes soft upon him.

He shifted his position so that it brought him nearer to her.

"I felt as though I had to do something strenuous, something with an element of danger—or go down under it. I rather wished I would get killed. I had been full of such hopes—to have them suddenly crushed."

"A—girl?" she essayed with sharp intuition.

"You have guessed!" he acknowledged.

"Have you—got over it?" she queried, knowing the question was daringly personal, and yet unable to resist asking it.

"Would it matter to you?" he demanded, sliding along the bench nearer to her.

She twisted her hands nervously in her lap.

"Tell me, Molly?" he urged, reaching out and taking one of the restless hands in his. "Say what your eyes have already confessed — that you care!"

She threw a fleeting glance at him, and the hot color flooded her face. Timidly her hand returned his clasp, and she felt a soothing strength in the contact—strength tempered by gentleness. It was so exactly what she had always dreamed of in her lover!

"I—do—care." She managed to utter the words at last, so low that he had to bend his head close to hear them.

"Then I am glad it happened—it was for the best," he whispered. And as he discovered his lips so close to hers, he bent for a quick, bold kiss.

"Juan!" she protested, arching back.

"Forgive!" he panted apologetically. "I could not help it. I would take a hundred of them if I could—and still be hungry. Ever since I first beheld your lips I have been a starving man."

She glowed at his words, thinking how she, too, had felt at their first meeting. But she would not confess that to him.

"You must go," she warned. "My parents will be returning."

"I will get an introduction," he suggested.

Molly shook her head dubiously, thinking of her father's opinion of bullfighters. And then the thought struck her that he could not be "low caste" if he were really a lawyer. She must tell her father about it—some day when he seemed in a good humor.

"Wait till after Sunday," she advised, prompted by some instinctive caution. "My dad doesn't like bullfighters. But he may change his mind."

Juan shrugged doubtfully. "Well, in some way we will manage it. Everything will come out all right. You wouldn't let me—kiss you good-by?" he asked hesitantly.

She thought she should refuse, but he stirred her so strongly that she assented in spite of herself. "Just once."

His arms flew about her, drawing her close in the gentleness of his strength, and he bent his lips to hers in a deep, lingering kiss that left her dazed. The door had closed behind him before she was aware of his departure. Sinking upon the bench, with finger tips pressed to her throbbing lips, she said to herself in happy wonder: "*This is love.*"

The future did not trouble her much—as yet. She took it for granted that she could win her father over in this. After he saw Juan's triumph in the bull ring, he would realize that Juan was a hero. And when he learned that he was qualified to practice law, everything would be all right. All she had to do was to keep her secret until after Sunday.

On the intervening days she saw Juan only from the balcony. It seemed wise to be cautious. But she blew him many a surreptitious kiss; and emboldened by the distance between them, let her lips murmur, "I love you," and noted the ecstatic light that sprang to his eyes while his hand pressed on his heart as if to keep it within bounds.

At last she might read his note safe from prying eyes

BY the time Sunday came Molly's eagerness could hardly be restrained to rational behavior. Mr. Marston had procured the tickets—only two, because Mrs. Marston steadfastly refused to go.

The *Plaza de Toros* (bull ring) reminded Molly of the sport stadiums at home, and she stared with eyes that glistened from excitement.

First came two *alguaciles* (police officers of the ring), clad in black velvet, and mounted on sleek, prancing stallions, their hat plumes nodding in time to the hoof beats. Close behind came the *matadors,* clad in brilliant gold-trimmed costumes—Molly's heart thumped wildly as she recognized Juan. She could hear the murmured "El Misterio" in the crowd about her, and pride stirred her at the magnificence, not alone of his costumes, but of his noble carriage. Behind the *matadors* came the mounted *picadores,* followed by the ring attendants and the *arrastres* or teams of mules to drag away the fallen beasts.

When the procession arrived at a dignified, swinging stride beneath the presidential box, all the fighters lifted their *monteras* in honor of the president, according to custom. But what was not according to custom was the fleeting, worshipful glance that Juan sent to Molly, and impetuously she touched the tips of her fingers to her lips in a gesture that he alone would know was meant for a kiss!

AS the bull dropped forward with blood spurting from his wound, Molly sprang to her feet and turned her back to the arena.

"Daddy! I want to go!" she begged. She was heedless of the frenzied ac-

clamations of the multitude for their hero, who had killed the bull with one stroke—a splendid feat. She did not care about his triumphant parade around the ring to the strains of a popular *tango*, while the people yelled "Viva el Misterio," and threw their hats down at him as a token of appreciation.

All she could think of was the torn horses, the tortured bull.

How can he do it, she kept repeating to herself, how *can* he?

"How did you like it?" asked Mr. Marston as they took a taxi home. "If there's anything noble in *that* performance, I'm a Mexican! And you wouldn't look at the worst of it. The horses—"

"Don't!" she begged. "That part of it is terrible. It's all terrible, but"—a little of her spirit returned to the defense of her hero—"a *torero* has to be mighty brave to face a raging bull, anyway!"

THE next day he came!

She had been lingering on the balcony till far past the regular time, and was just giving up hope when she saw him hurrying around the street corner, flushed and panting as if he had hastened to be in time for their *rendezvous*.

As she was alone in the house she ran down to the *reja*—and found him standing under the balcony with a most crestfallen air. Evidently it did not occur to him to look for her at the *reja*. For a moment she kept mischievously silent, letting him think she had deserted him. Then softly she spoke his name. Immediately his face brightened, his eyes shone luminously, and his attractive smile appeared. He strode to the grill.

"Little rat!" he reproached tenderly, "to let me suffer so! I thought you had gone."

She opened the door.

"I want to talk to you seriously," she announced, taking his hand and drawing him inside.

The instant the door closed behind him he had her in his arms, crushing her close, while his lips moved caressingly over her hair. Lost in that sweet embrace, Molly wondered how she could hurt him by condemning his profession.

"A kiss!" he panted in her ear.

She burrowed her nose into his shoulder so that he could not reach her lips. If he kissed her she knew she would not have the strength to talk to him as she must. His kisses played havoc with reason! He was stroking her hair gently, and his lips tenderly touched her ear and passed along her neck, waiting.

"We must talk first, Juan," she muttered, the words somewhat smothered in his coat.

"Talk?" he echoed rapturously. "Is it not better just to kiss and to feel each other's arms, Mollymine?"

She shook her head, and determinedly escaped from his embrace. Standing a bit away from him with her hands behind her back and her chin tilted, she said:

"There is something I must say to you—and it may change everything."

He could not resist the unconscious provocation of her lifted face, and swept her into his arms and kissed her before her words reached his senses. When they did he sprang back and stood as if awaiting the pronouncement of his doom, jaw tightened, eyes strained.

"What do you mean, change everything?" he cried. "*Nothing* can change this that I feel for you!"

"It may," she persisted through trembling lips.

At the thought of sacrificing this exquisite love which had sprung up between them, her limbs felt suddenly weak. She tottered to the bench and seated herself.

He sat down close to her and gained possession of one of her hands.

"Now tell me. I shall hold tight to this life-preserver and try not to go under," he said whimsically, crushing her fingers in a fierce grip.

"Ouch!" she could not help crying.

"Forgive!" he begged, and kissed the tip of each one of the abused fingers and rained dozens of kisses in the reddened palm. Then he asked with modest pride as if he could wait no longer for her praise: "Did you like it —Sunday?" He looked into her face eagerly for her response.

"No!" she burst out, made cruelly abrupt by the hurt inside her. "It was a horrible exhibition — barbarous— how *can* you?"

PAINED wonder crept into his eyes. "Molly! You do not understand. It was an Andalusian bull—that one—the most fierce of fighting bulls. And did you not see— I got him with but one stroke?"

"The way they stuck pointed things into the poor bull—all over him—no wonder he was fierce—Andalusian or not! All you men tormenting just one bull! And those horses—torn to pieces —I will never forget the horror of it as long as I live!"

He stared at her silently during this torrent of words as if trying to comprehend her point of view.

"It is sentimental and weak to object to bullfighting," he murmured in a troubled tone. "You heard how the people acclaimed me—they did not object. In fact," he gave a little bitter laugh at the futility of his news, "I have been offered a wonderful contract for a series of fights in Spain. That's what they thought of it! I came to tell you—that you could rejoice with me! Molly, can't you see? The danger— the exhilaration of victory—it is marvelous! And my contract, it is for five thousand dollars, each *corrida!* It would make me a rich man—I could give my wife everything."

"I'd rather be the wife of a poor lawyer!" she wailed. "I don't want to be married to a barbarian!"

"You would—marry me—if I was a lawyer?" he breathed, his eyes flaming into hers.

"Yes!" she admitted impetuously.

"Molly!" He said it like a prayer. "To have you for my wife—always by my side— But ah!" he sighed heavily. "You ask so much. To give up my fighting—when I have struggled so to make a name for myself. And at last comes this contract—"

"Please give it up!" she besought passionately.

He buried his face in his hands, elbows resting on knees; and there was a long silence.

At last he raised a face that was pale and gloomy.

"I meant to tell you that I had found some one to effect an introduction to your father—but perhaps now you do not wish it."

"Not unless you refuse the Spanish contract," she replied promptly, to her own surprise. She had not believed she could be so firm with Juan, whom she loved..

Never would she forget the look that came to his eyes, a look of a unutterable hurt and wounded pride and misery. He rose stiffly to his feet, bowed formally to her and started for the door.

"Juan!" she cried involuntarily. She could not let him go. It was on her lips to say: "Be a bullfighter if you want to, but don't leave me," but when he turned questioningly, hopefully, she controlled herself enough to say shakily: "Will I see you again?"

A spasm passed briefly over his face. For a moment she thought he would weep.

Then he blurted: "I must think it over. You ask so much of me."

"But I have so much to give you, Juan," she cried brokenly. "So much love. Wouldn't it be worth while to you? Don't you value my love?" Unexpectedly she began to cry.

"Don't!" he groaned, rushing to her and taking her in his arms. "Molly-mine, I could give up everything for your love. When I feel you in my arms, nothing else in the world seems to matter. But no! I must not be hasty!" He released her and stepped resolutely away. "I must think it over sanely. Good-by, beautiful one. Think of me, and it will help."

He had gone.

MOLLY neither saw nor heard from Juan during the following week.

Then one sunny afternoon she stood gazing forlornly up the street and wondering if perhaps he had gone to Spain to fulfill his contract without even saying good-by to her, when a young man in American clothes came jauntily around the corner. That may be some other girl's lover, she thought bleakly, coming to her balcony to court her, while I wait alone on mine. Idly she watched him, and suddenly she saw that it was Juan!

She stared in astonishment, scarcely daring to believe her eyes, while her hand fluttered over her pulsing heart. She had never seen him in anything but the garb of his profession before, and he looked very strange in conventional garments. Nice, though, she approved. Well set up, and he carried his clothes well. What did it mean, this attire? That she had won?

Now he was near enough for her to read the pleading in his eyes, and her lips curved in a smile. He came below the balcony and stood beseeching her.

"Juan—Juan!" she cried in a transport of joy. "I am so happy!"

"For the second time a woman has changed the course of my life," he told her wistfully. "But this time it means happiness!"

"Oh, Juan!" she had begun, when a voice from within checked her.

Molly made a frantic motion to Juan while her lips formed the word "go," and by the time her mother reached the balcony he was half a block away, sauntering lazily along. Mrs. Marston regarded his back suspiciously, but must have decided that he had nothing to do with the situation, for she said:

"I thought I heard you speaking to some one."

Molly turned to her with as innocent an expression as she could muster.

"How queer!" she commented. "I was merely watching that man," she indicated Juan, "to see if he would stop at one of these houses and speak to a girl on a balcony. I thought it would be fun to see how it was done."

Mrs. Marston took another look and sniffed. "Oh, he's just a dawdler—you can tell by the lazy way he walks."

They entered the room together, and Mrs. Marston looked at her daughter approvingly.

"You're picking up again, aren't you?" she remarked with satisfaction. "You look ever so much better to-day.

Perhaps you ate something that didn't agree with you."

FOUR days went by without the appearance of Juan. And Molly was beginning to worry again when her father came home one evening much perturbed.

He announced to his wife and daughter: "That Mexican bullfighter who calls himself 'El Misterio,' tried to get an introduction to me!"

"Why, what for?" Mrs. Marston asked in surprise.

"The reason usually is to ask for the daughter's hand," he replied dryly.

"How funny!" said Molly, feeling that something was expected of her. She could tell perfectly, from her dad's manner, that there was to be no introduction, and her heart fell; she had been counting on it more than she realized.

"Yes, it's very funny," echoed Mr. Marston. "Where could he have seen you? Or does he think I have money?"

"I'm sure it's not that, daddy," she cried quickly.

He looked at her sharply. "Don't be so sure about anything where a Mexican bullfighter is concerned," he advised.

"When will the introduction be?" she inquired, deeming it best to take it as a matter of course that he had acquiesced, though she did not need his reply to know it was a vain hope.

"Never!" he said positively. "I do not care to meet any bullfighter on social grounds. They are bad enough in the ring."

"He was rather nice looking," she said, trying to keep her voice impersonal. "Suppose he gave up fighting—then he wouldn't be so bad. I heard he was going to give it up and practice law."

"Even if he became a lawyer he wouldn't be any the less a Mexican, would he?"

"You are very bitter against the Mexicans, dad!" she accused.

"Not as Mexicans—it's only the idea of intermarriage that I object to. I'd rather see a daughter of mine dead than married to a Mexican." With that ultimatum he strode from the room, leaving a woebegone daughter behind him.

"Your father has very decided opinions about things," said Mrs. Marston complacently, "but he's always right." She heaved a little sigh and added her pet remark, the constant repetition of which had begun to grate on Molly's nerves, "After all, this isn't Long Island."

Molly shut herself in her room early that night and had a good, soul-cleansing cry. After which she bathed her eyes and formed the decision to defy her father. If Juan loved her enough to give up bullfighting for her sake, she would prove her love by marrying him in spite of her dad's objections.

She did not know that the Mexican's request for an introduction had aroused her father's suspicions!

Several days later Molly's constant watch was rewarded by the sight of Juan in the distance. She ran down to the door so that she could speak to him through the *reja*.

"Juan!" she called softly, and extended her hand through the grille.

"Mollymine," covering her hand with fervent kisses, "it's bad news. Your father will not consent to an introduction, so I may not ask for your hand in the customary way."

"He will never consent," mourned Molly.

"Would you marry me anyway?" he asked hotly.

"Yes, Juan. I love you!"

She stood on her tiptoes and pressed her eager face to the *reja* for his kiss. Just as their lips met she heard her mother's scandalized tones from the *patio*, "*Molly!*"

She jumped back, pale with apprehension, while Juan glided swiftly away.

MOLLY shut herself in her room where she stayed until she was sent for by her father. Not daring to ignore his summons, she appeared before him, sullen and defiant.

"What's this I hear about you carrying on with a Mexican?" he barked.

She flushed scarlet, but remained silent.

"Who was it?" he flung at her, and as she still maintained the disconcerting silence, "Answer me! Was it that bullfighter? That *El Misterio?*"

"What if it was?" she burst out, goaded into speech.

"Have you lost your senses, that you say a thing like that? What if it was, indeed! What are you coming to? A common bullfighter! A Mexican! How far has this gone?"

"I have spoken to him through the *reja.*" She thought best to confess a little, so that he might not suspect the rest.

"I want it to stop! You are not to speak to him again, or see him, or give him any encouragement whatever. The nerve of it! For him to come hanging around here when I refused him an introduction! The colossal nerve!"

After that Molly did not dare even to step out on the balcony unless she first made sure that no one was about. Doubtless her father was having her watched by the servants. She would sit in the room near the balcony with a book, pretending to read, but in reality listening for footsteps outside. When it sounded like Juan's tread she would jump up to look.

The first time this happened she stepped out on the balcony and leaned over to speak softly to him.

"Dad has forbidden me to see you," she said as quickly as she could. "I am being watched all the time." Then she added hopelessly with trembling lips: "I guess there's nothing we can do."

"Molly!" he rebuked. "Can't you trust me? I'll find a way. Our love is not going to be flouted as easily as that. Have courage, Mollymine, and a little patience—"

Molly heard a step behind her and Mrs. Marston's peremptory, "Molly! Come in at once!" She dared not disobey, but stepped back into the room. Her mother's eyes blazed angrily.

"Since you are so disobedient you will have to be watched closely. I shall see to that."

She kept her threat, and when Molly sat in the room by the balcony thereafter, some one always sat there with her. Usually it was Mrs. Marston. Sometimes the old housekeeper played jailer. Molly was even more afraid of old Niña than of her mother. She knew that the old woman had orders to keep her from speaking to the Mexican, and that she was inexorable.

ONE afternoon when Niña was on duty with her, Molly heard Juan's soft whistle. She stole a surreptitious look at the old woman, and was overjoyed to see that she was drowsing. As quietly as possible she rose and tiptoed out to the balcony. But she had no more than greeted Juan when she felt a grip on her arm and was jerked inside.

"Let go of me, Niña!" she ordered furiously.

"*Na!*" said Niña simply.

Molly tried to break loose, but Niña clung more tightly, determined to do what she considered her duty.

"I won't be touched by a servant!" cried Molly fiercely, struggling. "Hands off, Niña!"

When Niña still persisted in retaining her hold, Molly slapped her. A second later there was a stir at the balcony—Molly, still wrestling with Niña, saw Juan draw himself up and over. He came bounding into the room, his face flaming with fury. With a torrent of angry Spanish he tore Niña's hands loose. Molly was sobbing from the nervous strain, and almost ready to crumple up; but Niña, with an ugly scratch across her wrinkled cheek, looked as if she had had the worst of the battle.

"Go — go — Juan!" Molly begged tearfully. "Before my parents come. They will be so angry I don't know what they will do to me—go!"

Juan was distressed; he wanted to talk to her, to quiet her; but he saw that as long as he remained she could not be calm. So he stepped up to Niña, who stood cowering by the door, bent threateningly over her, and said a few emphatic sentences. Then he embraced Molly gently.

"She will tell nothing," he whispered in her ear. "I have fixed her. You must act as if nothing had happened."

With a quick kiss he disappeared. Molly looked dazedly around the room. Niña had seated herself in her chair again and was rocking back and forth, muttering to herself. The storm was over.

It was as Juan had said! Niña told nothing. When asked about the mark on her face she said that the cat had scratched her. But Molly fancied that Niña watched her with a resentful, malign look when she thought she was unobserved.

IT was several days before Molly again heard Juan's steps in the street—she was sure it was Juan! But her mother was sitting at a desk in the room writing, and would observe her if she got up. So, with tortured heart crying to her sweetheart, she forced herself to sit still with her eyes on her book. The steps were getting nearer and nearer. When they sounded as if they were right beneath the balcony, they stopped. Molly had an awful moment of fear that he would whistle or call to her and arouse her mother. Still she dared not get up, or even look up.

As she was sending all sorts of telepathic messages of warning and love to him, a small fold of paper came flying into the room across the balcony and landed at her feet! Immediately she put her foot over it, and when her breath began to come regularly again, looked up to see if her mother had noticed it. Apparently she had not, for she was still busy writing. The footsteps took up their tune, growing gradually fainter.

Molly let her book drop to the floor. In recovering it she slid the paper between its pages. Then she stretched and yawned, murmured something about taking a nap before dinner, and went off to her room.

The moment the door had closed behind her she became a different being —animated, sparkling. Had not Juan said he would find a way! She curled up on the end of her couch and opened the paper with fingers shaking from eagerness.

Mollymine, slip away and meet me at the pergola in *Alameda* Park whenever you can. I shall be there waiting all day long and every day until you come. I want to tell you of a plan. With all the love in my heart, Juan.

She sat thoughtfully considering this. It might be possible. She was only watched when in the balcony room or the *patio*. When they knew she was in her own room they did not bother about her. If she pretended to be ill, and then watched for an opportunity to slip out, she might manage it.

The next day she kept away from the balcony, hoping to dull their suspicions. And on the following day she complained of a bad head and stayed in her room. She thought she noticed relief on her mother's face when she said she did not feel well enough to get up, and she thought, "Poor mother, what a care it is to her to have to play warden to me!"

When Niña came to remove her luncheon tray, she asked to have the blinds drawn tight as she wanted to sleep. She waited until the rest of the household should be settled for their *siesta*, and then stole out of her room. She hardly dared breathe, for she knew that if she met any one now she would not be able to get out. But she got down to the outer door safely, and it was the work of but a moment to let herself out. Once on the street, she flew to the corner as fast as her legs would carry her, hailed a taxi, and directed it to the park.

Whatever happened afterward, at least now she would see Juan!

SHE dismissed the taxi at the entrance to the park, and then hurried under the noble poplar and cypress trees to the pergola. There she paused in dismay, for she saw no Juan! Her frantic glances showed her only the usual loungers on the benches, who were too listless even to try to flirt with her. She had never considered the possibility of not meeting him. Suppose she had to go back home to find that her absence had been discovered—and she would not have the compensation of having seen him! Tears stung her eyes at the thought.

Just as she was thinking herself the most miserable girl in the whole of Mexico, she felt a touch on her arm, heard a passionate voice in her ear, "Mollymine!" and whirled around to see Juan. She flung her arms about his neck, heedless of the onlookers, with a cry of welcome that was almost a sob. It was Juan who kept his sense of propriety, gently loosened her clinging hands, took her arm and sauntered off with her. But all the time he was murmuring words of love, of comfort, of heartache.

"Oh, Juan, it is such heaven to see you at last!" she cried, her face glowing with delight. "You can't think how awful it was to hear your footsteps going by and not be able to see you or speak to you."

"And me!" he groaned, "to walk endlessly around this miserable park without even being certain that you had got my note!"

"What is your plan?" she asked presently. "I don't dare stay out much longer or they will find out."

His plan was that they should elope. He wanted her to come with him right then and there, but somehow she could not make up her mind to do it.

"I must think it over—" she wavered.

"What must you think over?" he challenged. "Don't you want to marry me after all? Is it because I am a Mexican?"

"I don't care what you are!" she cried vehemently. "I love you enough! But—let me pack a few of my things—and at least leave a note for my parents."

He coaxed and pleaded, but in the end she won. They decided on the next night, at midnight, when every one would be asleep. He would come to the house for her, and she was to be ready to let herself out.

A FEW minutes before midnight of the appointed day found Molly waiting in a fever of excitement. She had been ready ever since the household had retired. Now she opened her door and crept stealthily out. There was not a sound in the house. She wanted to dash down to the door and out, and get it over with; instead she slid along, placing one foot after another as carefully as she could. After what seemed ages she reached the *patio*. Now just to go around the tiled walk in the shadow to the door.

She had reached the door!

As she put out her hand to open it, a figure glided out of the darkness in front of her, backing against the door to bar the way. She gave a startled scream—for a moment she thought it a trick of her imagination. It couldn't be anything else! No—no—not now, with only the door between herself and Juan.

"Molly!" she heard him at the *reja*, warningly, "be still or you will rouse some one."

"*Na—na!*" rasped a familiar voice, and Molly recognized Niña!

Her small, keen eyes were shining triumphantly, vengefully, at her young mistress, as she stood guardian over the door.

"Niña—aside!" Molly tried to make her quavering voice sound authoritative. "I must get out at once."

"*Na—na!*" chuckled Niña, enjoying her power.

And then she moved her hands and a gong sounded and resounded through the house. She had rung the old servants' summons that was never used except in cases of emergency! In a few minutes the whole household would come hastening to the *patio!*

"Niña, let me out!" wailed Molly in desperation, shaking the old woman by the shoulders.

But Niña would not move aside, and she held the key clutched firmly in her hand. Juan tried to reach her through the grille, but his elbow would not pass between the bars.

"Juan, it's all over," sobbed Molly, as lights began to appear in the house. She dropped at Niña's feet, her hands clasped in pathetic appeal. "Please—please! You can have anything you want if you will—"

But Niña did not care about rewards. Her withered face parted in a malicious, toothless smile of satisfaction that told Molly plainly she was acting not so much from duty as for revenge.

"Mollymine! Listen!" Juan's voice penetrated her despair. "Never give up. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Juan," she choked.

"I will find a way. You just have faith and patience. As long as you love me nothing can keep us apart. No matter *what* happens, some day we will be together."

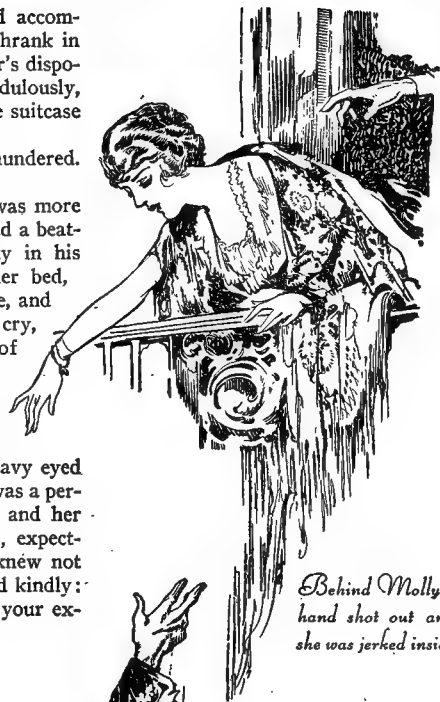
As he said the last word there was a stir in the *patio*, and Mr. Marston and several of the servants appeared simultaneously.

"What's the trouble?" he bellowed, one hand holding up his trousers which he had not taken time to secure, the other brandishing a revolver.

Niña glided aside; she had accomplished her purpose. Molly shrank in the corner, awaiting her father's disposition. He stared at her incredulously, at her traveling clothes, at the suitcase at her feet.

"You were eloping!" he thundered. "Go to your room!"

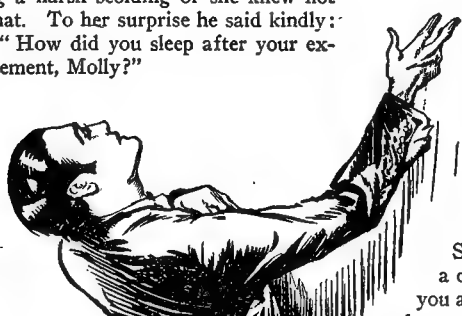
That was all. But Molly was more shaken than if she had suffered a beating. There was such finality in his tone. As she cowered on her bed, shaking as if she had the ague, and unable to sleep or even to cry, she tried to remind herself of Juan's words of encouragement.



Behind Molly a hand shot out and she was jerked inside

THE next morning she was still lying in bed heavy eyed and listless when there was a perfunctory knock on the door, and her father came in. She cringed, expecting a harsh scolding or she knew not what. To her surprise he said kindly:

"How did you sleep after your excitement, Molly?"



The unexpected gentleness caused a lump to form in her throat and her eyes to smart with hot tears so that she could not answer. Mr. Marston stepped over and sat down in a chair by the bedside.

"Mother and I have been making plans," he said cheerfully. "We think you need a change. So after you have rested up a couple of days, I'm sending you and mother off to the States for a holiday! Won't that be nice?" As she still could not reply, he continued: "You will visit all the folks, see all your old friends, and get a new outlook on things."

So that was it! He was sending her away to forget Juan! But she would never forget him. It did not matter how much time, how much space, passed between them, she would

always wait — just as Juan had told her to. She would cherish to the end memories of her lover—his hot kisses, his ardent embraces, his fascinating smile, his tempestuous blue eyes.

"Won't it be nice?" her father repeated.

He waited, and she tried to make some sort of a reply, but speech was beyond her. She knew that if she started to speak she would burst into a flood of tears—and she did not want to cry before her father. She was afraid he would be cross because she did not answer, but he patted her shoulder and rose briskly.

"Take it easy until you feel better," he advised, and left her to herself.

IN a week Molly was well enough to travel. She had suffered a nervous collapse that only perfect quiet could cure.

Her parents kept up the tone which her father had adopted that first day, one of patient kindliness, treating her like a sick person instead of an erring one! She found it harder to bear than harshness, because she could not resent it. She hated them for sending her away, for trying to break up her romance, and yet they were so amiable to her that it gave her no excuse for a quarrel.

The day finally came when they were packed and ready to go. It was with a sad heart and misty eyes that Molly looked back at the balcony and thought of the important part it had played in her love story.

They reached the depot, and were immediately accosted by the beggars. Their "*Perdoneme por Dios*" turned away most of them, but one was more persistent, a dirty fellow, hat pulled down over his eyes, *serape* over his head and held around his warped, ungainly body. He slunk after them, making his plea particularly to Molly. She shook her head listlessly.

He was still at her heels when her mother said impatiently:

"For mercy's sake, Molly, give him a penny to get rid of him."

Obediently Molly fumbled in her bag for a small coin, and as her parents entered the depot waiting room, she stopped to give it to the objectionable beggar. But when she held out her hand to him, instead of taking the coin he slipped a piece of folded paper into her hand.

Startled, she looked at him more keenly—and found herself looking into a pair of fervent blue eyes!

"Juan!" she whispered. "Oh, Juan!"

"Mollymine!" he murmured. "Obey the note and all will be well. Unless"—he gave a helpless shrug—"you forget me."

"I will *never* forget you!" she vowed.

Unable to contain himself at that, he caught her hand, pulled her out of sight of the door, and kissed her. It was a short kiss, because they heard steps coming toward the door, and he had just time to bow low and hide his face, while he muttered obsequious thanks, before Mr. Marston appeared in the doorway to see what detained Molly.

"At last I'm rid of him!" she said with feigned relief, and added to explain her delay, "I couldn't find anything small enough to give him!"

The paper she had tucked down in the deepest corner of her bag to await a moment of seclusion. She felt like a new person. Juan's kiss had contained the elixir of life for her! Once more she found herself with courage and faith.

She could scarcely restrain her anxiety to read her note. Several times on the train she tried to get it out; but each time she found her mother's eyes upon her. Not until they were at the hotel in *Vera Cruz,* where they were to take the boat the next morning, did she get an opportunity to read the blessed message.

Little Lost One. But not lost forever! Have courage! Pretend to forget me, and be bright and gay. Then you will be allowed to return. Send me a radio message which boat you take. I will meet you at *Vera Cruz* with a minister! While the boat is making a landing we will get on by the side opposite the shore. Elude your mother and come to me. Before a landing is made you will be my wife. Courage, Mollymine, and know that my love is always with you.

JUAN.

Then followed his whole name, "Juan Cartiez," and a return address.

MOLLY followed Juan's directions conscientiously. She pretended to be forgetting him; she had a gay time with the old crowd in America, she flirted a bit with some of the boys. With the knowledge that Juan's love was following her constantly, it was not so hard. But when she was asked to tell about the bullfights and the handsome toreadors—that was different.

"Bullfighting is barbarous — horrible," she said. "I don't want to talk about it." And that was all they could get out of her!

After about a month of this, Mrs. Marston began to get restless, and broached the subject of their return.

"Molly," she asked tentatively, "would you like to go back now? Dad has been alone a long time."

Molly thought best not to appear too eager, though her heart was singing within her at the idea of returning—to Juan.

She said carelessly:

"I've had a wonderful time — and I'll hate to leave the bunch—but after all they've been keeping me on the go so much I'll be glad of a rest."

"Do you think you've quite—forgotten—er—er—your trouble?" Mrs. Marston probed diffidently.

"What?" asked the girl, as if not comprehending at first. Then she gave an amused little laugh and assured her, "I think I'm growing up, and not so foolish any more."

"That's good!" Her mother drew a breath of relief. "Then we may as well make our plans."

Molly was in a fever of impatience until they were actually on the boat headed for Vera Cruz. The worst of it was she had to keep a calm exterior; had to act as if it did not matter much one way or another whether they returned or not. But when they had actually left shore far behind she had to get off by herself to have a little laugh and cry of ecstasy. Juan's image was dear as ever in her heart; it had not faded—indeed, time had seemed to strengthen it.

She found the radio cabin as soon as she could, and got on friendly terms with the operator before sending her message. The second time she went up to see him she met her mother coming down.

"Where have you been?" she asked, surprised.

"I've been sending your father a message," Mrs. Marston replied, avoiding Molly's direct gaze.

That's funny, thought Molly, she cabled him before we started, and got a long cable in reply. That reminded her that she had not seen the cable; when she asked about it her mother

had merely said that as usual her dad was full of advice. Well, why worry about dad's advice complex, she said to herself, when each minute brings me nearer to Juan!

"Are radio messages very expensive?" she asked the young operator pleasantly.

"It all depends," he answered, flushing as if embarrassed.

How shy he must be was Molly's thought. She took a paper and pencil. "I'll write the message and you tell me how much it will cost."

The operator regarded her with a distressed air. "Please—don't," he said in a low voice.

"Why not?" She considered him in utter surprise.

"It's none of my business," he blurted, "but I like you, and I'd like to tip you off. I have been directed not to send any message from you, but to turn it over to your mother."

"What!" gasped Molly, all her hopes and delight crashing within her.

So that's what her dad's cabled advice was — to keep on watching her. He was not so easy to fool as her mother! And that was what her mother had been doing up in the radio room!

"Can't you," she fumbled with her purse on a last wild hope that she might bribe him. "Couldn't you let it get by without—seeing it?"

"Oh, no!" he cried, much perturbed. "It's captain's orders. I'm so sorry," he added sympathetically. "I'd really like to help you."

"Thank you ever so much," she said gratefully. "It was so good of you to warn me."

THEN she went despondently down to sit enveloped in gloom in her deck chair. Juan could not meet her—her father had won after all! Thus ran her thoughts for quite a while, when suddenly she seemed to hear Juan's voice saying: "Courage, Mollymine. Never give up." She gave herself a mental shake. Here she was all ready to give up as easily as that! Why, she was not worthy of Juan's love! She grit her teeth, straightened up, and set her wits to work to see what could be done.

First of all she took a look around her to see if she might get any inspiration from her environment. The chair on her right was empty—that was her mother's chair, and Mrs. Marston was in the cabin nursing a bad head. The chair on the other side was occupied by a thin, gray-haired, bespectacled lady, with a bright green sweater and a varicolored scarf wound about her head. Molly had been amused at her at first, but now she thought there was something pathetic about her.

She was busily reading, and sighing rapturously once in a while. Molly peeked over to see what the book was that enthralled her so. The title was: "When Love Came." Molly surreptitiously read a few paragraphs, and saw it was a romantic thriller. So the funny old lady was romantically inclined! That gave Molly an idea!

Perhaps she could help her! Her wits began to work in earnest now. If she could make up a disguised radio message and get her neighbor to send it for her— She studied the lady's face out of the corner of her eyes to see if she could trust her not to tell. She thought she could—anyway, she would have to risk it—it was her one chance of getting her message to Juan.

Impulsively she touched her arm.

The little lady gave a start at being recalled from the land of romance so abruptly. Then she smiled into Molly's eager, pretty face.

"I'm Molly Marston—and I'm in an awful fix," Molly explained promptly. "I thought you looked so kind—you might be willing to help me."

"My dear!" Miss Smith closed her book over her finger, all attention. "Is it a love affair?"

Molly nodded, and moved by Miss Smith's sympathetic attention, poured out as much of her story as seemed necessary and discreet. By the time she came to the part she wanted Miss Smith to play, that lady was perfectly thrilled and willing to do anything.

Molly wrote her message, merely stating that she was on board the "El Rosario," bound for home, and signed it with the letter M.

"Fortunately my name is Margaret," said Miss Smith, "so there will be no question about that, deary."

She reached over and squeezed Molly's hand encouragingly. "Now you wait, and I'll hurry back and tell you if everything went all right."

True to her word, she soon came tripping back, her cheeks flushed with excitement.

"It's perfectly all right," she assured Molly in a breathless whisper. "He didn't blink an eyelash, deary—I told him it was my nephew!"

With Miss Smith as ally and confidant, Molly felt much better. She told her how Juan was to meet the boat and board it as they pulled in to Vera Cruz, and Miss Smith volunteered to take charge of Mrs. Marston and keep her attention engaged so that Molly could slip away to Juan.

MOLLY could hardly eat or sleep during the rest of the voyage. At last came the day — the hour!

Every one was on deck watching Vera Cruz assemble itself from a blur in the distance into the outline of buildings. Miss Smith, who had planted herself at Mrs. Marston's elbow (with a confidential wink at Molly), engaged that lady in conversation so successfully that when Molly said she wanted to run down to the cabin for something, her mother hardly noticed that she had gone.

With her breath coming in little gasps from her agitation, and her heart swelling within her, she flew to the other side of the boat and looked anxiously about. A little brown bumboat, equipped with a sail, such as was used to bring fish to the vessels in port, was pulling alongside.

In it were Juan, two friends, and the minister!

Molly could scarcely restrain herself. With a hand clapped to her mouth to keep back her joyous cries, she jumped up and down, waving wildly to Juan. He took time for only a single wave in response, and hurried to board the vessel, but his smile was well in evidence, and the color that came and went under his dark skin told plainly of his excitement. The moment he stood on deck Molly was in his arms. But he pushed her away gently.

"Mollymine," he warned, "we must lose no time. This time we must finish before we are discovered. My two friends are witnesses—the minister—" was his rapid introduction. "Quick—where can we go?"

"The barber shop," Molly suggested.

They all rushed to the barber shop, entered and locked the door, to the amazement of the barber. But when the minister raised his hands in the preliminary rites of marriage, he uttered a horrified exclamation and poured forth a flood of protesting Spanish. Then he unlocked the door, flung it open, and ordered them outside.

"He says the captain has warned the crew not to be party to a marriage concerning Miss Marston," interpreted Juan hastily.

"How clever of dad!" Molly exclaimed involuntarily.

"He will lose his position—he is terrified."

"Let's go somewhere else—hurry!"

They made a mad dash for the purser's office. It was empty. The minister began the ceremony. Before it had progressed very far, the purser came, took in the scene, and ran off, evidently to find the captain.

"Hurry up," hissed Juan.

The minister rattled off the formula at a great rate.

"Do you, John Carter, take this—" Molly heard him say, and stared up at Juan alarmed. He smiled and nodded reassuringly and the ceremony was completed!

They fell into each other's arms just as the captain, the purser, and Mr. and Mrs. Marston plunged into the room, followed discreetly by Miss Smith.

"You are a moment too late," said the minister affably, while Juan's two friends stood grinning from ear to ear.

Juan and Molly separated, but Molly clung desperately to his hand. He was her husband now; he could protect her. He gave her hand an encouraging squeeze, then led her toward her parents.

"Allow me to present Mrs. John Carter," he announced grandly, "of New York and Mexico City!"

"John Carter!" gulped Mr. Marston. "That's an American name."

"As sure as I'm an American!" agreed Juan emphatically.

"Why, Juan!" gasped Molly, feeling that this crowned her happiness. She had not married a Mexican after all, so her family would be reconciled!

"Why Juan—why didn't you tell me?"

"Mollymine," he explained, "I wanted to be sure this time that I was loved for *myself*, and *really* loved. I got so badly cheated on love that other time, that I was afraid. And—my contract forbid me to tell my nationality until the end of the season!"

"Dearest," she flung her arms around his neck in front of them all, "are you sure of my love now?"

"Sure as I can be!" he cried, and bent to kiss her.

Mr. Marston cleared his throat. "Well," he grumbled, "I suppose since you've given up bullfighting, and since you are really an American—" Then he thrust out his hand to his son-in-law to show that hostilities had ceased.

"Let me kiss the bride," chirped a voice, and Miss Smith came bubbling over. "He's perfectly grand, deary," she whispered, and gave Molly a good kiss.

Then every one had to kiss the bride, and Molly thought she saw Miss Smith kissing the bridegroom, too! After that was over Molly found herself in Juan's arms again, irresistibly drawn there.

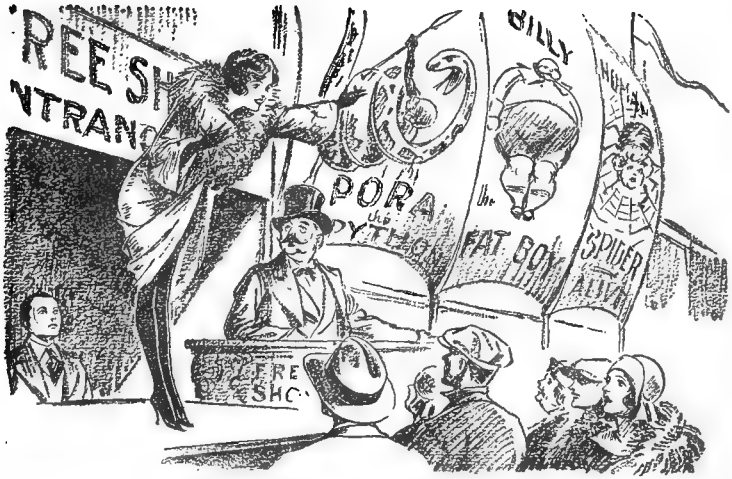
"We'll see you later on shore," said Mr. Marston significantly, and motioned to the others to come out with him and leave the couple alone.

"Juan—John!" sighed Molly rapturously. "To think it has really come true!"

"Didn't I always tell you it would, little Doubting One?" he reminded her.

His tempestuous blue eyes seemed unusually peaceful as they met her adoring gaze, but smoldering fires burned in their depths. Her lips sought and found his, she let her eyes close blissfully, while her heart sang "And they lived happily ever after."

5



Scylla began desperately: "Don't go! Come! See all, see everything!"

Love in Peril

Among the freaks of a side show two hearts find testing—and love

By Doris Knight Jessee

SCYLLA CONLIN fell in love with Denny Maxmillian the very first instant she saw him. That wasn't so strange. Other girls had loved Denny. He had friendly blue eyes and the sort of hair that is so black it doesn't seem as though it can be true.

Added to that, he had a way of walking as though he owned the earth, and a smile that had proved devastating to girls more sophisticated than Scylla.

But he wasn't smiling when she first glimpsed him. He was standing in the center of the showroom of the side show, with all the freaks gathered about him in welcome.

Denny was Michael's son, and Michael owned the "Remarkable Aggregation of Extraordinary Acts." Denny had been away at school all his

life. This was his first close glimpse of the way his father made money, and it was proving rather overwhelming.

Michael caught sight of Scylla hesitating in the doorway.

"Denny, me boy," he boomed in his big voice, "I want you to meet one of the biggest attractions of our show—Miss Scylla Conlin, who does a spider act that makes 'em stand up and take notice, let me tell you!"

Scylla came shyly forward. She had known nothing but freaks all her life. Denny was so wonderful. She thrust out her hand.

"Hello," she said shyly.

But Dennis was staring at the hand she offered. Scylla had forgotten that she was dressed for her act. She wore black tights that covered her arms and hands as well as her body. A black satin blouse that came to her knees completed the attire. Around her neck was a big white Pierrot ruff.

"I—I forgot," she murmured.

Her eyes filmed with tears. It was suddenly borne in upon her for the first time that she was as queer as the rest of them. The thought was like the sting of a whip.

Dennis must have seen, for he caught her hand as she dropped it to her side.

"I—I'm awfully glad—I mean, it's great to see such a pretty girl."

Scylla summoned a wan smile. He was a dear. Now that she saw him in the flesh, after hearing Michael sing his praises for years, she thought Michael hadn't half done him justice.

"I—hope you'll like it here," she ventured.

Dennis didn't reply to that. But Michael was bringing the rest of them forward. Scylla's father, Joe—his face seamed and lined with the make-up of countless years as a comedy juggler. Her mother, Fanny, blond, coquettish still, wearing pink and blue silk tights, a trifle knobby now, because she doubled in a grass skirt dance a little later on, so had the tan knee lengths under the blue ones.

Florient Furness, the living skeleton. Daisy May, the woman with a man's stature and voice. She had vainly tried to raise a beard so that she could join the circus; instead, she had landed with the Remarkable Aggregation.

"WE was sure glad to hear you was comin'," piped the fat boy, Billy, in his absurd little voice. It was as if all his faculties had gone to the three hundred pounds of fat that was his stock in trade. He had tiny, piggy eyes, a button of a nose, and a funny little mouth.

Dennis shook hands with him, and murmured something unintelligible.

"Since your dad got a cold and couldn't ballyhoo for the show we've been playin' to bad business, let me tell you. Michael tells us you won all the prizes for talkin' in the college where you was. Is that right?"

Denny's face grew a trifle redder. "Just some debates I won," he said evasively.

"You watch!" said Michael stoutly. "Dennis'll have every person along the row just clamorin' for the opportunity of getting into our show!"

"Never knew sea gulls would pay admission. That's all that'll be out on a day like this!"

"I think the sun'll be out in a little while," put in Scylla pacifically. She seemed to be the only one who had guessed Denny's embarrassment.

Pete shook Dennis's hand limply. Pete was a snake trainer; he looked not unlike a snake himself in his spangled tunic and green tights.

Gus, the half-wit who fed the animals and was general utility man, came in just then and immediately began to let off little yips of excitement. Dennis started nervously.

"Don't mind Gus," said Scylla. "He doesn't mean any harm."

"I—I see," said Denny.

He looked wildly about at the big room made of varicolored boards obtained from wreckers' stock of lumber. All around the edge of the place were restless animals in small cages.

Dinky and Dud, the racoons, thrust long, narrow noses through the bars. The tapir slept. The tiny honey bear sat up and squeaked for candy. The monkey climbed to the top of his cage and jumped down again, with rhythmic regularity.

In the center of the room was the snake pit. It was in reality only a big canvas box without a top. Around the edge ran a railing where people stood in order to look down at the writhing reptiles within.

Scylla felt a lump rise in her throat as she saw how terribly ill at ease Dennis was. He was trying to smile, but his face looked wooden and his cheeks were miserably red. How cheap it must seem to him!

MICHAEL draped an arm about the boy.

"Come on, lad. I'm anxious to hear you in action. Give us a ballyhoo that'll get in every person along the walk. Make your old man proud of you! I've spent a deal on your education. Now's your chance to pay me back."

Scylla clasped her hands together to still their trembling. Couldn't Michael see that the boy was almost sick with embarrassment?

"Why don't you bally first, so that Dennis can get the hang of it?" she suggested. "This is pretty new to him, you know."

Dennis shot her a grateful glance, but Michael was in the throes of a spasm of coughing. "Can't do it," he choked.

Scylla set her teeth. "Then I'll try!" she said.

The words astonished even herself. She had been rather backward and retiring all her life, despite her side show existence. But the sight of this good-looking chap's obvious misery made her forget herself.

Michael beamed at her. "That's a good girl," he approved. "When I get some money I'll be raising your salary!"

"Oh, that's all right!" Scylla was slipping off her ruff. She borrowed her mother's spangled cape and wrapped that about her.

"Wait," Dennis called. "I want to tell you how much I appreciate this." He shook hands with her again and smiled straight into her eyes.

Scylla's face was swept by a warm tide of color. "I don't mind," she said. "Come on. It won't take you long to get the hang of it."

Her heart was thudding wildly, but it wasn't because she was going to ballyhoo the delights of the show to a *blasé* public. It was because Denny's glance had sent a torrent of wild excitement through her veins. She felt as though she had drunk of some potent, heady draught.

She slipped through the canvas flap and held it open for him to follow.

"We ballyhoo from here," she said shyly as she stepped on the little platform which fronted the place. As a background she had weird pictures on canvas, of herself, her father and mother, Pora the python, and Billy,

not to mention Daisy May, pictured as wearing a most impossible plumed hat.

"You can stand down there," said Scylla. Panic was fast overtaking her. She felt she had to begin to speak or she never would.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" she shouted as loudly as she could. "Don't go. Come!" She stopped and swallowed. Several stragglers came to a giggling halt in front of the Remarkable Aggregation stall. Scylla caught her breath and went on, in as good an imitation of Michael as her memory would permit.

"Stop, look and listen! Everything is free inside. Come in. Don't go. Come in."

Scylla took another deep breath and went on desperately:

"See all; see everything! See Daisy May, the girl who talks like a man. See Billy, the fat boy; you've seen 'em fat, but never like this! He's co-lossal! See Spidera, the spider with the head of a girl. And last but not least, the reptiles. You expect to see rattlesnakes, ladies and gentlemen. Of course you do. You see 'em in the picture up there." She pointed toward the highly-colored canvas lithographs. "But you don't know we have—" She sank her voice to an impressive, sibilant whisper. "*Pora,* the gen-u-ine python."

She looked down. Quite a crowd had gathered. Michael stepped up beside her.

"I'm proud of you!" he whispered. "I think my voice will last out long enough to finish this. Go on in now."

THANKFULLY Scylla stepped down and hurried inside the showroom. Denny followed. "You're mighty clever," he said. Scylla glowed. "What do you do? What's your stunt, I mean?"

"Watch!" She was fastening the ruff about her neck once more. There was a huge picture frame set out from the wall and elevated about eight feet from the floor. Presumably it was nothing but a deep frame, but in reality there was a boxlike incline built back of and above it.

Scylla climbed a hanging ladder, then slid down the incline until her head fitted into the realistic cloth body of a mammoth spider. Her toes were caught over a little cleat on the top of the incline, which prevented her from sliding down too far. The white ruff about her neck cut off the view of the spider-body's top.

"My Lord!" Dennis sounded horrified. "You don't mean to say you stay like that!"

"With my feet in the air? Surest thing. I'm used to it. My neck hurts a little, that's all. You see, I have to stretch my neck to make it appear that my head grows on the spider body. In the position I'm in I really should have my head hanging down; instead, I have to look folks straight in the eye."

"I think that's awful for you! Besides, I saw that trick exposed, once when I was at Coney Island in New York. That girl just sat on a little shelf. The box kept the illusion, just the same."

"Yes. Some of them lie down, too. But Michael wants everything better than regular side shows. This way we allow folks to go *behind* the frame. That heightens the illusion, and they never notice the box because it's painted black. By the way, unhook that ladder, will you?" Denny complied. "And toss it over in that corner so it won't be noticed."

As Dennis did so, the honey bear reached out and patted his arm. He

gave a startled cry, but Scylla laughed. "Don't mind my namesake. She's just being friendly."

"Your namesake?" Dennis looked interested.

Scylla bit her lip. "It's a foolish name," she said, "Scylla. When I was born there was a mermaid act playing in the show with my parents. They called themselves Scylla and Charybdis. My mother thought Scylla was a lovely name! I didn't find out what it meant until I went to school, then I—I hated it."

"I think it's the name of a very lovely—and a very game—girl," he said.

Scylla's heart began to thud madly once more. In that moment she idolized Dennis.

"Right inside, ladies and gentlemen. The show is starting *now*. You don't want to miss anything. And don't forget that it's all free."

Michael's voice came from the doorway.

"Of course, if you feel like paying the insignificant sum of a quarter when you go out, you are privileged to do so!"

"And try and get out without paying!" Scylla murmured to Dennis as they watched Michael herding in a small group of sheepish people yearning to be fooled.

"This is Spidera! The spider with the head of a human girl."

Scylla smiled and rolled her eyes. Touching the wires which controlled the spider body, she made it sway gently from side to side with a crawling motion of the long, threadlike legs. The row of high-powered globes about the edge of the frame, turned outward, heightened the illusion.

"She lives and breathes!" said Michael.

"My land!" exclaimed an old lady. Scylla smiled.

AFTER the group had looked their fill they passed on to feast their eyes on the rest of the wonders. The curtain was dropped in front of the frame. While they were gazing at the reptiles Fanny went around to the back, attached the hanging ladder and pulled Scylla up.

Scylla hurried to her dressing room and sank down on the uncomfortable bench to think.

"Dennis," she whispered. "Dennis!"

Pete Martini knocked at the door. She knew his rap. She frowned, as she obeyed the summons. "Act go all right?" she asked.

"Am I not the great Martini?" He thrust out his chest. "The snakes dare not try their tricks with me. No. No!"

Scylla yawned. "Save that line for somebody who'll appreciate it." She wished he would go away and leave her alone to dream of Dennis. Dennis with the blue eyes and the nice smile.

Pete edged closer. "Always you joke with me." His small eyes were bright, alert, like those of his own snakes when he roused them to anger. "But I will not endure it—much longer! I love you, Cylla Conlin. I have loved you always!"

"Oh, Pete, stop that!" Scylla was angry. "If you've told me that once, you have a million times. And you know perfectly well that I don't care for you." She glanced at a battered alarm clock on the rickety table. "Time for me to bally some more. I did pretty well, didn't I?"

Pete caught her arm.

"And why did you do that for this Dennis? Let him work. Why not?"

"Let go, Pete!" Scylla shook him aside angrily. "And don't let me hear

you say anything more about Dennis! He's too good for this miserable dump."

"So! You do like that puppy?"

With a single leap Pete reached her. His long, thin arms twined about her waist, drawing her close. His lean face, leathery and unpleasant, touched hers.

He kissed her, not once but many times. His lips were cold, despite his fervor.

Scylla fought against his embrace. She hated snakes. She never looked into the snake pit if she could help it. Now she had the horrible sensation that she was being slowly crushed by Pora, the python.

She screamed.

The next instant, Pete went whirling across the room to land in a crumpled heap against the wall. Then Denny put his arms about the trembling Scylla.

"I was just coming in," he said. "Do you want me to finish him? I'd like to!"

Scylla cuddled closer in Denny's embrace. How different the feel of the steely arms about her. She wanted to stay in their shelter forever, and she clung to him.

With a wan smile Scylla said: "I'm all right. Come on out into the showroom. The crowd has gone, hasn't it?"

"Yes, but—"

"Come. Please!"

With fascinated horror she was watching Pete's bright eyes blink open. In the semidarkness of the room his glance was reptilian—menacing.

"I don't know how to thank you." Her trembling fingers caught his hand, which sent a thrill through her as she drew him through the doorway into the showroom beyond. "Please don't say anything to my father about—about Pete. Nor to your father."

"But that snake deserves to get kicked out, pronto!"

"But you see, he brings patronage to the show," Scylla said seriously. "People love to look at snakes—and shudder. I don't know why. I just hate them myself. But if you tell your dad about Pete he will make him go. Then we'll all suffer—don't you see? Please, don't say anything."

"Well, if you put it like that—I won't say boo!" He grinned down at her. "But just let that animal try to kiss you again!"

He doubled his fist and gazed admiringly at it. Scylla felt a tingle of primitive pride in his strength.

She loved Denny! Loved him for all time.

"IT'S time for me to play barker." She spoke hastily, to cover her agitation.

Denny stopped the girl as she was beginning to undo the white ruff.

"I think I've got the hang of it now," he said. "I—I hate to do it; ballyhooing's a bit—well, out of my line, but I'll try. I can't have you going out there again—with all those people staring. You're—I—"

Without another word he hurried out. A few moments later Scylla heard his resonant voice spieling in imitation of her harangue of a half hour before. She clasped her hands tight together.

"He's clever and he's wonderful!" she said to herself. "And he's, oh, so strong! But don't make a fool of yourself over him, Scylla Conlin. He's too wonderful for you even to think about!"

She caught her breath in a little sob, then hastened back to her spider position.

A proud and beaming Michael brought in another lot of spectators, leaving Denny outside, crying the next show. The crowd had hardly been herded out, upon surrender of their quarters, when a new group came in.

"What did I tell you?" crowed Michael in a glad aside to Scylla. "That boy of mine has got 'em going."

Pete, sulking near his snakes, overheard. "It is because the sun has come out that there are many people in our show," he said scornfully. "Not because that fool is shouting outside."

Michael paid no heed. "Our tide has changed," he exulted. "Luck is with us! And we're eating big to-night, let me tell you!"

The prediction proved a true one. Until five thirty there was no respite for the Remarkable Aggregation.

"Closing time!" called Michael as the crowds began to dwindle. "We'll stop for supper now and open again at seven. Come in, Denny, lad. And it's proud I am of you."

Dennis almost fell into the room. His face was gray with fatigue. He went over to Scylla. "Gosh!" he sighed, and drew a deep breath.

"You did wonderfully," Scylla assured him earnestly. "Your father—all of us—are—are so proud!"

He slid his hand over her fingers and held them close.

"You're pretty much of a darling, Scylla Conlin!" he said. Scylla's heart began turning somersaults in her breast.

"Hurry into your street togs. We're eating together to-night—and it's on the house," Michael announced. He was joyous.

All the rest accepted with riotous gayety and scattered to their dressing rooms. In a remarkably short time they were back.

"Where do we eat?" asked Joe.

"How about Hamburger Frank's—down the line?"

"Fine!" they chorused.

Denny looked at them. "I—I don't believe I'm so hungry," he said. "Suppose I just wait till you come back?"

Scylla knew why. If possible, the Remarkable Aggregation looked funnier in their street apparel than they did in their show costumes.

Daisy May had attired her six feet of stature in a gown of canary yellow with a short fur coat topping it, which barely reached to her waist; a poke bonnet surmounted the whole. Billy wore a black and white checked suit which made no secret of his ample curves. Scylla's mother and father looked their profession unmistakably. Pete's greenish-blue suit was an assault to the eyes.

"Nonsense, lad!" cried Michael. "This party is in your honor. Of course you'll come!"

"All right," said Dennis slowly.

THEY perched at the counter of Hamburger Frank's. The place was heavy with grease and smoke. All the troupe were in hilarious mood.

Scylla sat between Denny and Pete. She had tried to avoid Pete, but he had edged into the place next her before she was aware. He touched her arm. "A Martini never forgets an injury," he whispered. Scylla shivered.

She was so used to being stared at that she would have been oblivious to the curious glances had it not been for Denny's miserable embarrassment.

"Never mind," she said comfortingly. "Pretty soon you won't notice at all."

He looked at her in sudden surprise.

"How you understand!" he said. Scylla thrilled to the compliment as girls always have from the time of Adam. "It's not so bad," he went on. "Now that I know I'm not—all alone."

Color flamed in Scylla's cheeks. The breath caught in her throat. Not alone. That was what she had been—all her life. But now she wasn't! There was Denny, and she loved him—and he loved her.

"This feed's really on Dennis," Michael was saying largely, his mouth full. "'Twas his b-a-l-l-y-i-n-g that brought the money—and the luck. May it continue forever!"

Pete abruptly pushed back his plate. "I'm not hungry," he snarled. With a look of venomous hatred for Denny he strode out of the place.

Michael blinked. "What's the matter with him?"

"Just—just temperament, Mike," Scylla said soothingly.

"Temper, you mean," corrected Dennis. He reached over and squeezed her hand under the table. "Let's forget about him, and talk about us," he suggested.

Scylla dimpled. Her eyes were like stars. "Let's!" she agreed

SCYLLA pulled the small green hat over her left eyebrow and slipped on the smart, apple-green coat. There was fur around the collar, gray fur which brought out the beauty of her eyes. She petted the collar—the first pretty outfit she had ever possessed. Studying her reflection in the wriggly mirror in the dressing room, she fairly shivered with happiness.

In the month since Dennis had been crying the show the Remarkable Aggregation had prospered almost miraculously. Part of this prosperity was due to the perfect springlike weather; the rest of the credit went to Denny. He had studied the art of being a barker until he had nearly perfected it. He persuaded people to enter the show who had had no such idea—just by the mere force of his personality. All salaries had been raised. Every one was joyous.

Rat-tat! Some one was knocking at the door. Scylla froze. Pete, of course. How she hated him! Slimy creature!

"I—I'm dressing," she called.

Her voice wasn't quite steady. She wouldn't acknowledge—even to herself—how Pete frightened her. He was becoming more and more difficult to handle. Scylla knew that a word to Michael would end the thing: Pete would be dismissed immediately. But that would bring hardship upon every one. The Remarkable Aggregation couldn't charge more than a dime if the snakes weren't there. Spectators yearned to shudder over Pora and look with horror at the rattlesnakes.

Scylla wouldn't tell. That was all. But Pete was beginning to threaten Denny with some terrible fate if he didn't leave the girl alone. Dennis laughed and said he was quite able to take care of himself.

"Will you be ready soon?" came Pete's voice from outside the door.

"Not for a long time. You had better not wait."

"Perhaps later then."

Scylla heard his footsteps going away. She drew a deep breath. If only she could think up some method of discouraging Pete! There didn't seem to be any. She despised him almost as much as she loved Denny.

In the month Denny had been with the Aggregation, Scylla's first feeling of interest in the boss's son had

deepened almost to adoration. Would he like the new green coat and the pretty hat?

She smiled at her reflection as she remembered Denny's love making of the night before. He was so sweet—so wonderful.

ANOTHER knock sounded. Denny had arranged for her to meet him over by the beach, but he must have changed his mind. She threw the bolt immediately, flung wide the door—then stood, staring.

"So! You are not ready? You will not be ready for such a very long time. No. But when you think it is young Maxmillian, how different everything becomes!"

"Don't be foolish."

Scylla tried to assume an ease of manner she did not feel. Pete's face was contorted with rage, but as he looked his expression changed to oily admiration.

"I certainly *am* foolish," he agreed promptly. "About you. So-beautiful one!"

There was a predatory gleam in his dark eyes. His long hands hovered as though about to caress her. Scylla shrank back.

"Before Dennis came, you did not act like this!" he said reproachfully.

Denny strove madly to avert the horrible death awaiting them

"Neither did you, Pete. You're acting absurdly!"

"I was merely waiting. I knew you would love me in time."

"But I kept telling you I didn't care! Can't you understand that, Pete, and be friends?"

"Friends! Bah! You do not treat this Dennis like a friend. Only last night I saw you locked close in his embrace."

Pete moved closer. Scylla was huddled against the wall by this time. She began to be really afraid of Pete Martini.

"Then if you know I like somebody else, why don't you leave me alone?"

She was fighting like some cornered animal.

"Because I am going to have you. Or no one else is!"

"What do you mean?" She wetted dry lips.

"The moment you promise to marry this Dennis something will happen to you—or to him!"

Scylla straightened. "You wouldn't dare!" she said contemptuously.

His lips brushed her cheeks. She turned her head to avoid his caress and struck out wildly, but he paid no heed.

"I know you are meeting him by the seawall this noon. He asked you to come because he said he didn't want you to give your marriage promise with the witchery of a moon to help him. That—"

"You must have been listening," Scylla stormed. "You—you contemptible cad!"

"Yes. I was behind that old pile of lumber. You sat on the little bench, with the moonlight infolding you, and the sound of the sea in your ears. You let him make love to you—while I kept silent and—hated him. And—loved *you!*" He shouted the last word.

"Let me go!"

Scylla tried to grope her way past him, but he encircled her with his lean, apparently boneless arms.

"I will so arrange Dennis's death that it will be thought an accident—if you are fool enough to give him your promise!"

Pete's voice was sibilant. A hiss of menace. Abruptly he dropped his arms and stood aside for her to pass. She scurried away. Her heart was beating madly. All the joy was gone from the loveliness of the spring day.

SCYLLA made her way toward Denny, waiting across the broad highway by the seawall. She gave a sigh of regret for the perfection of the setting: the water was a rippling blue, topped with bits of foam; the air was balmy and fresh.

It was a day for love, for the ecstasy of being beloved: it was a day for happiness. But now Pete had spoiled everything. The ugly head of fear blotted out the beauty of the setting.

Denny didn't notice her agitation at first. He caught both her hands close in his, kissing her finger tips in turn. His eyes adored her.

"Most beautiful girl in all this world," he said fondly.

"Better than any of those college girls?" Scylla asked wistfully.

"A million times. Not one of them could hold a candle to you. Scylla, darling, there never has been any one else but you. Not from the very first instant I glimpsed you—in your pretty spider costume."

He bent and kissed her gently. Then he looked at her in surprise.

"What's the matter?" he questioned

swiftly. "Your lips don't answer!"

Scylla's eyes filmed with tears. "I —I can't marry you, Denny," she said brokenly.

"Why?" He put his face against hers. "Still worrying about those college girls?"

She shook her head.

"Then what?"

"Nothing. Only—I can't."

"Pete!" He brought the word out explosively. "Has that chap been annoying you again?"

"No, of course not," she said feebly, but Dennis caught the lack of real denial in her tone.

"What is it now? Tell me!"

After a time Scylla did tell him, half weeping as she talked.

"You silly dear!" Denny was kissing away her tears. "Don't you know that Pete is all talk and nothing more? No wonder he's crazy about you! Anybody would be. But—he's just an eel. Stop fussing about such a—"

Scylla looked around apprehensively. "Hush, please, dear. He was listening last night. He may be here now."

"I hope he's listening now, so I can tell him a few things! The dirty coward—to dare to scare you. Scylla, dear, say the words, so I can hear them. Say 'I love you, Denny. I'll be your wife.'"

"I love you—so much, my dear," said Scylla. "And of course I'll marry you. I—I just couldn't live without you."

But even while she was speaking she felt a horrible premonition of danger!

AS she made ready for the afternoon's show, Scylla felt terror gripping her. Everything was outwardly calm, but underneath was a sinister undercurrent.

The girl felt reluctant to take her place in the spider body; she even thought of telling Michael that she was ill and could not do her part that day. Then she shook off the idea as cowardly.

Pete was in the showroom when she came in. "Where's Mike?" she asked abruptly, trying to keep back the rising tide of fear which threatened to engulf her.

"Gone to Oakland for the day."

Pete didn't look up. He was tugging mightily at the snake pit. He moved the whole cagelike structure, with its protecting canvas sides, over some four feet. So that it was directly in front of the spider frame.

Scylla set her teeth. He was fixing it so that she couldn't fail to look in at the lot of slimy, writhing snakes all the time she was in the frame. So that was his first revenge.

"What are you doing?" she demanded.

"Nothing."

He didn't look at her. Only reached down and drew out one of the smaller snakes and caressed it lovingly.

Scylla shivered with loathing. She was glad that Billy came in just then and took his place in the little booth that was his position during the show. Daisy May arrived a moment later, and Joe Conlin came yawning into the room followed by Fanny. Scylla felt safer then.

Pete spoke abruptly.

"Porta, she is hungry. And perhaps mad. I have not fed her any rats for some days. When she is mad she wakes from her stupor. Do you see? Then it is not good to be near her. She will twine her body about one and crush the life out."

Scylla swayed.

"It is too bad you gave your promise

to Dennis," went on Pete, still engrossed in his snakes. "It is, indeed, a shame!"

Denny's voice at the door warned Scylla that he was bringing in a group of spectators. She had hardly time to climb to her place and unhook the ladder before they had taken their places in front of her. Hastily she snapped on the electric lights and began swaying the spider legs about. She tried not to look into the snake pit, for she knew that was just what Pete wanted. But some horrid fascination drew her gaze again and again to the writhing mass of snakes below her.

Pora didn't appear as sluggish as usual. The python reared her head and ducked it again, undulating nastily. The sight made Scylla dizzy. Such a thick, horribly slimy body!

Something else brought mounting terror to Scylla.

There was a little creaking, tearing noise. Very gradually she felt the cleat over which her toes locked tightly pull away from the board to which it was nailed. Her mind began hideously active. Pete had loosened that board!

She was going to fall into that vat of snakes. The cloth body of the spider would rip easily. She tried to cry aloud to tell Denny of her danger. The words stuck in her dry throat.

Another thought came. Denny would follow her into the pit. He, too, would perish! At that, she shrieked aloud. Every one started nervously. Denny ran close to her.

"What is it, dear?" he called anxiously.

WITH a final creak the cleat gave way! Scylla slipped down. For a second the spider body resisted her weight, then with added impetus she hurtled out of the box-frame and straight into the pit of snakes!

She had a glimpse of Denny's white face as he made an ineffectual grab at her falling body.

People screamed. There was instant tumult. Snakes seemed all about her, darting out forked tongues, gliding over her body.

"Don't come!" she shrieked to Denny, but she spoke too late. He was beside her, grasping her in his arms.

"I've turned my ankle," she moaned. "I can't get out."

It was then that Pora's big, cold body wrapped itself about both of them. Vainly Denny pitted his strength against that of the huge python. He tugged furiously. The tumult of the watching spectators grew wilder and more vehement. Scylla heard Pete's gloating laughter.

"Now you will believe I keep my word!" he shrieked.

Scylla caught a glimpse of her father's graying face. Saw her mother pound impotent fists against Pete's chest. Then, high above everything else came Michael's bellowing voice:

"Pete, you dirty son of a scoundrel!"

"Michael—come," she gasped chokingly.

Denny's teeth were set, great beads of sweat were on his face as he strove madly to avert the horrible death tightening about them.

"Into that pit, you scum!" Michael's voice roared. He picked Pete up bodily and cast him in with all his might.

Pete landed on Pora's tail. Instantly the reptile abandoned Scylla and Denny to turn upon the intruder. In her rage she did not recognize Pete. Slowly, inexorably, she began coiling about him while he gibbered in fear.

Some one had brought a rifle from the shooting gallery across the way. There was a sharp report, another. A third. Pora slowly uncoiled, jerked spasmodically—lay still.

Pete was thoroughly frightened. Making a last pretense of fondness for the loathsome reptile, he wailed:

"Pora is dead! My own—my beautiful—Pora. Dead!"

Michael picked up the rifle again.

"You'll be dead, too, if you don't get out within five minutes—and stay out—for the rest of your life!"

Pete fled unceremoniously. By this time the showman had recovered his poise. Turning to the audience he said urbanely:

"Hope you enjoyed our little specialty. Just deposit a quarter at the door as you go out. If you please. That is, if you consider you got your money's worth."

"Money's worth? My gosh!" exclaimed an awe-struck voice. "Do you suppose that scene was just framed, after all? Jumping catfish!"

MEANWHILE, many hands had reached down to drag Scylla to safety. Denny, too, had been pulled to the top of the pit. The girl sat on a bench, with the man kneeling at her feet. She rubbed her neck frantically, trying to rid her skin of that creepy feeling of cold. She trembled hysterically.

"Are you all right, darling?" Denny was entreating.

"Perfectly, dearest." There was a sob in her voice as she leaned forward to put her hand on his rumpled hair. "Denny?"

"Sound as a dollar," he laughed.

A moment's silence. Then strong, masculine hands sought slender feminine ones—sought and found them, ecstatically.

"You are wonderful," Scylla said tenderly, "but what'll the old show do without"—she shuddered slightly—"without Pete and his snakes?"

"Do?" responded Denny. "Why, Mr. and Mrs. Denny Maxmillian will put on an Apache dance that will knock them all for a row. Won't we, darling?"

The crowd had melted away, the performers had gone to their dressing rooms; even Michael had vanished, leaving the lovers alone in their newly-discovered bliss.

"Yes, dear, together—"

Denny swept the girl impulsively, hungrily, into his arms, and lips met lips in a kiss of purest bliss.

Again she was in his arms being borne to safety

Wooing Wings

Nearer draws the menace in the clouds and nearer the wings of love to Mariel!

By Clelia S. Mount

THE STORY SO FAR

MARIEL DEVOE, who has always lived a carefree, jazzy existence at Six Trees, finds the even currents of her butterfly life disturbed. Raoul Fernier, a famous French aviator who is incognito, asks her to marry him. Then her father tells her that she is only his foster child, and refuses to tell Mariel the name of her real parents.

Devoe has received several mysterious "gray letters." He takes Mariel and Betty, her younger sister, on a secret trip aboard his yacht, the *Black Star*. Their destination proves to be Long Lake, Devoe's lumber and pulp mill camp in northern Maine.

There Mariel meets Lance Thayer, a young aviator flying for the Forest Air Patrol. She also hears of a mysterious air raider known as the Black Star. The similarity in names adds to her perplexity.

Marshall Devoe leaves for Canada and Mariel, in the elapsing days, sees a great deal of Thayer. She realizes he has fallen in love with her, but it is only when Thayer saves her from some dangerous rapids that she awakes and he tells her of his love.

Mariel believes she returns this love, but there is one thing preventing her reply.

How can she answer the young aviator when she does not know her own identity?

CHAPTER V

MARIEL gently freed herself from Lance Thayer's eager embrace. Her heart, pounding ecstatically, sank slowly. Her eyes were tragic when she lifted them to his.

"Mariel! You don't care. My love," he said bitterly, "means nothing to you!"

"Oh, it does!" she faltered.

"Then why—"

He leaned close to her again, but the enchanted moment was over. Sanity had come back to Mariel. Her secret built a wall between them. She would be brave and courageous.

"Don't ask me, Lance. There is a secret I may not tell you that stands in my way. Something I do not understand. Oh, don't think that what you have told me means nothing. It does—it means so much!"

The aviator's handsome, sun-bronzed face brightened.

"Mariel, I won't give up hoping. If you do care a little for me, our love will overcome all obstacles. Remember, I shall always love you. Always!"

She saw how wet he was, and seized that as a means of turning the conversation.

"You saved my life, Lance! How—"

Thayer fished out a waterproof cigarette case and struck a match.

"I was going back for gas. Flying rather low, I sighted your canoe off Moose Island. I guess the rapids blotted out the sound of my motor. I could see you being drawn into them, and I knew I would have to act quickly. So I just dropped down into the still water of that cove." He indicated.

"And risked your life to save mine!" Mariel added softly.

He shrugged, and deliberately made his manner casual.

"You don't suppose I would stand by and see you dashed to pieces? Well, the sun's dropping down in the west, and perhaps we should be getting back." He extended a strong, brown hand and helped her to her feet.

"Some day soon you will come with me on a flight I have to make up the lake, a patrol flight? I think I can promise some wonderful scenery and a few thrills."

Mariel looked up at him with starry eyes.

"I want to, Lance."

He led the way through some dense underbrush and out to the edge of a swamp. The roar of the rapids died behind them. Thayer considered her quizzically.

"I'm afraid I'll have to ferry you over to the cove."

For the third time Mariel was in his arms. How strong he was! He carried her as if she were the lightest of burdens. The ooze crunched under his leather boots. His head rested against her red sweater, and she saw how the red shine of the fading sun streaked it with molten gold.

The desire to run her hands through the rough tumble of Lance's hair possessed her. He was such a boy, such a dear, manly boy. Mariel sighed when they reached the sandy shelter of the cove and he set her down.

"Now for the bus. I believe I can get it in shore farther."

SHE waited in the sunset hush. The tranquil stillness of the forest closed in about her. From very far away came the faintest beelike hum. Thayer, helping Mariel into the cockpit beside him, suddenly snatched up binoculars and trained them on the colored sky. He was so tense that recollection touched her quickly.

"A plane?" she inquired, straining her eyes, but seeing nothing.

The hum dwindled into silence. Reluctantly Thayer returned the glasses to their case.

"Yes, a plane. Some one flying

high and fast into the south. For a minute I imagined it might be—"

"The Black Star!"

Thayer turned to her.

"Yes, the Black Star. He hasn't been on the wing lately. It's about time for one of his raids. I've only a month to make good my vow. I intend to capture the Black Star!"

His face was set and resolute. One of Mariel's pretty white hands fluttered out and rested on his arm like a fallen rose petal.

"I know you will, Lance!"

"It's not going to be any easy job. The patrol knows his hideout is somewhere in these woods; but where? Who is he?"

Who was the Black Star?

From the first Mariel had associated the dreaded air raider with the mystery that cloaked herself. She had no definite grounds for this, but she could not put the thought away from her. The name of Marshall Devoe's yacht and the name of the marauder of the skies. What was there that might link both?

She was pondering the question while Thayer busied himself at the controls. He made a graceful take-off, climbed for altitude, banked and set out for Long Lake. In hardly a breath it seemed the white hydroplane was off the island camp and Betty was paddling out for her in a canoe.

"Good-by for a little while," Thayer whispered, for Mariel's ears alone.

And that was all until she was in the canoe with the dark-eyed Betty.

"You're a wham!" Betty said slangily. "Where's your canoe, and what are you doing in Lance's plane? I suppose the paddles leaked or something, and you hailed him for a ride. Pardon my humor, but I would like to get this straight."

Betty's high spirits made Mariel speculative. While she briefly told the story of her rescue from the rapids, her mind went back over the time of their stay at Long Lake.

She knew Betty well enough to understand that the discomfort of camp life was not at all to her liking. Betty loved luxury, the boudoir at Six Trees in which to dawdle magnificently, a crowd of youths and girls to amuse her, and plenty of jazz to keep her stimulated.

Yet Betty acted as if their stay at Long Lake was a peppy adventure!

"I wonder what's up?" Mariel asked herself.

PRESENTLY the night came, towing a luminous moon in its wake. A fine, argent dew fell. The surrounding mountains robed themselves in dark silk.

After dinner Mariel and Betty heaped logs on the fire and watched them blaze. Outside, in the cook shed, a man's voice began a song. Mariel jumped up. Betty laughed.

"Don't be alarmed — it's only Joe Fourfeathers."

"Joe Fourfeathers?"

"Big Mac," Betty explained, "sent him out here this afternoon. He arrived while you were away. He's partly Indian, a very decent sort, and he's pitched a tent back of the well."

Mariel pursed her red lips.

"But what's the idea? Why did Mac send him over? Is he going to cook for us or something?"

Betty giggled.

"No such luck. I believe Mr. Fourfeathers is here to protect us. From what, I'm sure I don't know. Probably he came on dad's orders. Anyway, he rode over with his rifle, duffel and what not. If only he played bridge

we could have him in for a three-handed game; as it is I'm going to retire. Life in the woods is a bit enervating."

"Yet you seem to be bearing up well," Mariel murmured.

"Oh, I'm a cheerful little soul," Betty laughed from the bedroom door. "I invariably make the best of bad bargains. Be a dear and look to the fire before you come in."

The nights were penetratingly cold. Mariel drew closer to the fire. Memories of the afternoon tiptoed back to her. Her heart was haunted by an irresistibly sweet longing. Her mind was filled with strange, confused thoughts. Again she wondered what the future held; when Marshall Devoe would sweep away the dim cobwebs of mystery and tell her who she was.

Upon his explanation depended her dreams and her love. Would Lance Thayer love her if she were a nameless nobody? Would Raoul Fernier still want to marry her if he knew she was not Marshall Devoe's daughter?

Thayer and his kiss! A tremulous ecstasy possessed her. She had never known that love could be so magical.

"Mariel, I almost forgot." Betty, wrapped in a fluffy negligee, loomed up in the bedroom door. "Father sent us a letter by courier. Joe Fourfeathers brought it over from the camp. See if you can make any sense of it."

She advanced casually into the room. Mariel stiffened in her chair before the hearth. In Betty's hand was a familiar envelope.

It was long and gray!

"WHAT does it say? Read it," she requested.

"It simply says," Betty replied, "*Be careful of the Black Star!* It isn't even in dad's writing. What do you suppose it means?"

Mariel recognized the same inked scrawl that had decorated the note the mysterious masked figure had left under the side door at Six Trees. For one minute she was half tempted to tell Betty the menace that had taken them from civilization to the forests of northern Maine.

Then she knew how selfish it would be to frighten the other, and she pretended indifference.

"Probably the letters got mixed somewhere. I mean, father's note went to the wrong person, and we got this. To-morrow we'll try to find the courier and straighten it out."

Her tone was light and careless, but when Betty said good night and returned to the bedroom, Mariel studied the gray letter with narrowed eyes.

She had been right after all.

There was some connection between the masked prowler at Six Trees and the air pirate of the desolate woodlands!

CHAPTER VI

A SHAFT of sparkling sunshine slanting across the room awakened Mariel the following morning to the glory of a perfect autumnal day. Betty's place beside her was empty.

Listening, she heard her sister talking with some one who answered in guttural accents.

Mariel closed her eyes and let yesterday sweep back to her. Quietly she thrilled again to love's awakening before she dressed, washed in stinging cold water, and made her toilette before the cloudy mirror of the bureau.

The newest arrival at the camp proved to be a brown-skinned, liquid-eyed youth. Joe Fourfeathers was cooking breakfast while Betty, in lux-

urious ease, lounged in the doorway staring out into the misty south.

"Joe, this is my sister, Miss Mariel. You didn't meet her yesterday, because she was too busy being saved from the rapids—and everything. How do you like our new chef?"

"I thought Joe was sent here to protect us. Betty, you're imposing upon him."

The Indian laughed.

"No. I like to cook. For one summer I helped in the kitchen of the big hotel at Contrecœur."

"About that letter you brought for us," Mariel said briskly. "Who gave it to you?"

"Big Mac."

Mariel understood that the courier had given the letter to MacIntosh, the manager of the mills, and whom she had known as a very small child. She determined to speak to him about it at the first opportunity.

"Darling," Betty began, when they were seated and the Indian had discreetly withdrawn, "I've something tremendous on my mind. I've been keeping it a secret, but murder will out sooner or later. What's the date today?"

"The thirteenth."

Betty inclined her shining, brunette head. When she looked up again her eyes were full of mischief and excitement.

"Exactly. The thirteenth. I have every reason to believe we're going to have a guest sometime to-day!"

Mariel ceased stirring her coffee and stared across the red tablecloth.

"A guest?"

"I disobeyed dad," Betty continued blithely. "He asked us not to tell any one we were leaving Six Trees to come up here. But I had to tell some one, and I—I did."

"Betty! You don't mean—"

"Yes, I do!" There was a note of gay defiance in her voice. "You don't suppose I would come to this stodgy place and give up all my spiffy good times without having some one I like to drop in and cheer me up? Let dad be angry about it! I don't care. It was silly, making a mystery of our destination, anyhow. No sense to it at all that I could see."

"Who did you tell? Who's coming up here?"

"Raoul Fernier!" Betty explained. "He promised he would arrive on the thirteenth."

Mariel gripped the edge of the table. No wonder Betty had made a lark of the camping pilgrimage at Long Lake. Raoul Fernier was coming! This man who had asked her to marry him; who, in the lantern-lit dusk, had pleaded his love so ardently!

"Go on—bawl me out," Betty cried softly.

With an effort Mariel checked the speculative rush of thought that assailed her.

"That's twice you've disobeyed father. Once when he forbade you to make a flight with Raoul and now—"

"It's perfectly all right for you to go up with Lance Thayer in the hydro!" Betty retorted quickly. "Whatever I do I'm blamed for."

"But father impressed upon us the need for secrecy."

"Why? Raoul isn't going to spread the news. You're jealous because I like him. Be fair about it—you *are* jealous."

Mariel's smile was pensively sad. If Betty only knew! She stood and was about to say something when the distant hum of a motor broke in upon the stillness of the shack.

Almost at the same minute Joe

Fourfeathers appeared in the doorway.

"Big aëroplane!" the Indian exclaimed. "She's coming down. Shall I go and get my gun?"

"*Raoul!*"

BETTY was on her feet and outside in a flash. While Mariel explained to the Indian that firearms were unnecessary, she heard her sister's shout of welcome. Drawing a breath she went outside.

Fernier was flying a gray hydroplane; the wing-spread was generous, it tapered gracefully, and across its fuselage in bright blue were the words *Interstate Airways.*

While she stood and watched, Betty paddled Raoul Fernier to the dock. His helmet was off and his wavy black hair glistened. He stepped ashore and stretched out both hands, his white teeth glinting in a smile.

"Mariel!"

The old fascination seemed to brush her with invisible wings. The magnetic touch of his hands over her fingers brought back remembered nights, remembered scenes of love.

"This is quite a surprise, Raoul."

"A pleasant one, I trust."

"Well," Betty put in with a drawl, "Mariel didn't seem the least het up when I broke the news a little while ago. She was as sore as the dickens because I disobeyed dad. You know, we weren't supposed to let a soul know that we were up here."

Fernier threw back his head and laughed.

"Trust me. I have betrayed your secret to no one. How good it is to see you again—both of you. But this isolation. How do you girls stand it? You, who are so used to comforts. Betty especially!"

"We're managing nicely," Betty smiled. "Of course, it isn't the Ritz, but it might be worse. It's a great deal better," she added naïvely, "since you have arrived."

"Have you had breakfast?" Mariel inquired, always practical-minded.

"Thank you, yes. A thermos of coffee and some sandwiches. I fly with one hand and dine with the other. Twice I lost my way. This is unfamiliar country to me. I came," he explained, "from the new flying field at Boston. I am testing this machine for the Interstate Airways."

"How long are you going to stay, Raoul?"

Betty's question was full of suppressed eagerness. When they reached the tiny porch Fernier shrugged.

"Alas, not very long. To-night I must return. But I shall come back and see you frequently. May I ask the same question? How long do you contemplate staying here?"

"Ask dad—he knows!" Betty sang out.

She darted away to see if the Indian had started to wash the breakfast dishes. Fernier leaned to Mariel.

"You are not glad to see me."

"Of course I am."

"And you have had time to think over what I asked you? These days, these weeks, Mariel! Surely they have brought you closer to understanding. Will you marry me?"

His personality, the suave, worldly charm that had always impressed itself upon her, was strong. Mariel looked away and closed her eyes. What fascination did this man exert? Was it enough to make her forget Lance Thayer and the necromancy of yesterday afternoon on that high bank above the turbulent rapids her lover had snatched her from?

"Come and walk a little way with

me," Fernier requested suddenly. "I must talk with you."

THEY went down a path that skirted the underbrush and paralleled the mint green water lisping along the shore. Giant oak trees were leafy sentinels there. The sun unrolled a yellow carpet for them.

Fernier paused beside one of the huge trees. He caught Mariel's arm and drew her to him.

"I was hoping you would know your own heart by this time. Hoping you would set a crown upon my dreams. Always I think of you, Mariel. High above the clouds, down among people, in cities and alone. Always, Mariel. Can you resist a love like this? You cannot be so heartless!"

It seemed so futile for her to combat his pleading. Into his words he put all his native eloquence. His burning eyes caressed her, and his hands on her arms were hotly vibrant.

"Love must come of its own accord," Mariel said faintly.

"Why can't you love me!" he demanded. "Is it because you do not want to? Or is it because," he added keenly, "there is some one else?"

Mariel lifted her wide-eyed gaze.

"And if there was—some one else, Raoul?"

His expression changed. Some of the drama in his look vanished. With a low, inarticulate cry he drew Mariel into the circle of his embrace.

"I will not give you up—to any one! Never! I love you, and you must be mine!"

"Raoul! Please! You are hurting me!"

"I love you more than life itself!"

His lips sought her own. Mariel moved her head desperately to evade his kiss. After yesterday, Fernier's kiss upon her mouth would seem a sacrilege.

"Raoul! You must not—"

"Your lips, perhaps, belong to another! No matter! His love can be no greater than mine!" Again he plead with her. "One kiss, sweetheart! One kiss to remember when we are apart! You will not deny me that!"

Suddenly Mariel felt weak. Against an unwanted kiss forced upon her she might struggle valiantly, but against his pleading she felt small and helpless. While she wavered in doubt he had found the cherry bowknot of her mouth, and his savage, questing lips were joined with hers in a kiss.

Dimly Mariel saw his eyes as if in a dream. A sense of unreality stole over her. Her heart cried out, and she shrank back, protecting her lips.

As she did so, knowledge seemed to whisper to her. Fascination was one thing and love was another. This man had always fascinated her, but now she understood she could not love him.

Her heart was in the keeping of Lance Thayer!

From somewhere down the path, Betty's echoing call steadied her.

"Mariel! Raoul! Where are you?"

With a breath, Fernier's arms dropped away. He straightened up, becoming his jaunty, gallant self in a twinkling. Mariel saw that his emotions were betrayed only by his eyes.

"Perhaps," he suggested urbanely, "we had best join Betty."

A little dizzily Mariel nodded and moved forward.

"When I come here again," Fernier whispered, "I hope you will know at last, and give me the answer I have waited so long to hear!"

Mariel looked out across the shimmering lake.

There was only one answer she could give him now.

LUNCHEON was made gay by Betty's happy chatter. She wanted to know all the news. Had Fernier been to Six Trees lately? Had everybody gone back to town for the opening of the social season? Had he been in New York recently? What were the names of the shows on Broadway, and who were the latest stars?

Relieved that she did not have to keep the ball of conversation rolling, Mariel listened to Fernier's reply.

"New York," he was saying, "is a horrible place. It is no spot for those accustomed to the open sky and the song of the propeller. Theaters, crowds and restaurants. I do not like them."

"But you like your Paris."

"True. Paris is a part of me. It is different."

"It has the same theaters and crowds," Betty argued. "What's the difference?"

"You would not understand. Paris is my home."

"I think I do understand. Isn't it," Betty inquired musingly, "because in France you are something of a hero, and over here you're plain Pierre Luvois."

Fernier smiled at his incognito. Mariel, watching him, noticed his expression change at the sound of the name Betty murmured. She couldn't explain it to herself, but his eyes seemed to retreat. He appeared to draw away into a secretive shell, though his voice remained unchanged.

"Possibly," he admitted easily.

Luncheon over, it was Mariel's turn to do the dishes. Betty volunteered, but Mariel shook her head.

"Raoul," Betty stated, following her into the cook shack, "wants to take me up for a flight. Is it all right with you?"

"I suppose it will have to be."

"Inasmuch as Lance Thayer rides *you* around the clouds!" Betty drawled. Then she gave Mariel a little hug and a few minutes later the roar of the gray plane's motor sounded. Joe Fourfeathers presented himself with a dish towel to assist Mariel.

"I don't like your friend, the gentleman with the black eyes," the Indian declared with engaging candor. "He look like a bad man."

Amused, Mariel laughed at his gravity.

"Mr. Fernier is a very celebrated French aviator, Joe. In the country he comes from he is honored."

Fourfeathers shook his head.

"All the same I don't trust him," he grunted. "I don't like the way he looked at you."

"When you're through with those plates," Mariel said abruptly, "you can get the oars and take them down to the dock. I'm going to row over to the camp."

REACHING the general store, the shrieking sawmills and the long tiers of the barrack buildings a half hour later, Mariel went on a still hunt for Big Mac. The loggers had run a fresh consignment of fallen trees down the Senebac. Trucks and lorries were bringing them into the mills. She found the Scotchman in his office beyond the blacksmith shop.

"What brings you, lassie?" Jab MacIntosh wanted to know. "Not that heathen I sent to mind you girls?"

"Joe is a jewel," Mariel informed him.

"Then if it isn't the Indian, may I ask what it is?"

"Father," Mariel explained, "sent us a letter yesterday. I'm sure there is a mix-up somewhere. The note we received isn't the one he sent."

Big Mac shifted the tobacco cud in his leathery face.

"No? Then we'll find out where the right letter is. Find Shorty and bring him in here," he directed one of his office assistants. "Sit down, Mariel. It may be some minutes. The courier is apt to be up the river with one of the gangs. I see," he said shrewdly, "you have company to-day. Some of your smart New York friends, eh?"

Mariel nodded. She supplied a word or two of explanation. Big Mac chuckled.

"Well, better a friend than this air pirate. I hear young Thayer is still bragging about how he's going to bring the Black Star down to earth."

Mariel felt her smooth cheeks grow warm with color. MacIntosh's eyes drifted over to her. He chuckled again.

"A nice lad, Lance is. Handsome, too. I wouldn't blame a girl for being interested in him even if her father owned half the forests up this way. I knew Lance when his folks first came to Senebac Junction. Good, honest folk."

Mariel wanted to hear all she could about Thayer, and MacIntosh, always a good talker, was more than willing to oblige. However, he had no sooner started to tell her about the Thayers when the office door opened and the clerk came back with a red-headed, stockily built youth in a worn mackinaw and hip boots.

Big Mac straightened up.

"Shorty, this is Miss Devoe. She wants to know what you mean by getting her mail mixed: where's the letter the boss gave you?"

The courier's freckled face grew hot with color. He shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but that was the letter Mr. Devoe gave me when he went aboard the train at the junction the other morning."

"It was not!" MacIntosh roared. "Don't lie to me! I'll skin you alive, laddie! Now, out with it—where's the boss's letter?"

Shorty paled, and Mariel felt sorry for him.

"I—I lost it, sir."

"*Lost it!*"

"I mean," Shorty stammered, "it was stolen from me!"

Big Mac glared at him.

"Do you know at all what became of it?" he inquired mockingly. "And do you know it's a prison offense to mix up mail? Do you?"

Taking a long breath, Shorty told his story. While she listened intently, Mariel felt the tale confirmed her worst suspicions.

Shortly before embarking upon his private car for Canada, Marshall Devoe had given the courier a sheaf of letters which he had dictated to the secretary he took with him from the camp. With the mail in his pouch, Shorty entered his flivver and started on the long trip back to the mills. About noon he heard an airplane, but thought no more about it until, rounding a turn in the road, he had been held up at the point of a pistol by a masked man.

Curtly ordered to hand over the mail pouch, the man, Shorty explained, had inspected its contents. Removing and pocketing one letter, he wrote and substituted another.

"Then," Shorty quavered, "he told me if I knew what was good for me I'd keep my mouth shut and be on my way. That's the truth, Mr. MacIntosh."

"And who was the man?"

"I think I can answer that," Mariel interpolated in a small voice. "It was the same gentleman you were telling father about the night of our arrival—the Black Star!"

Shorty, relieved because he had an ally, bobbed his head energetically.

"That was him all right, Mr. MacIntosh. I had only gone a mile or two before I saw a black plane rising from that clearing near the Forks!"

"And you were too scared to open your mouth and say anything! Instead, you give Miss Devoe the wrong letter!"

"I was afraid of him—I still am," Shorty admitted.

"Go and tell your story to Colonel Roberts up at Patrol Headquarters," Big Mac ordered gruffly. "And don't be so close-mouthed in the future."

"What was in the letter?" he asked Mariel seriously, when Shorty had departed with alacrity.

She told him, left him shaking his head, and went back to the wharf at the shore below the camp. Standing there, she searched the sky for a trace of Lance Thayer's white hydroplane. Only a fast flying triangle of ducks heading for their Southern feeding grounds was visible.

Back at the shack on the island, Mariel found Betty had returned from her flight. There were warm, rose tints in her sister's cheeks, and her dark eyes danced excitedly.

"Raoul left a little while ago. He asked me to say good-by to you for

him. He wanted to take advantage of the daylight, and Joe said you had rowed over to the camp. I didn't know how long that meant."

She ran an arm about Mariel's shoulders, and gave her a sisterly kiss.

"I'm so excited I can scarcely breathe. Guess what's happened?"

Mariel looked at her sharply.

"What?"

Betty flung her arms wide.

"The most astonishing thing!" she answered. "Raoul asked me to marry him!"

CHAPTER VII

BELOW Mariel the world fell away like falling stars.

She was beside Lance Thayer in one of the patrol's regulation airplanes, and they were beginning the long flight Thayer had proposed. The roar of the motor was deafening. The whistle of the wind was a shrill symphony, and the cold of the upper air currents stung Mariel's face when she turned and looked down.

The shack on the island was a mere speck. Long Lake was a small mirror connected with other mirrors. The forest, so majestic and formidable, was a rough jumble.

She was gloriously happy.

Not even the anxiety, the feeling of impending danger, aroused by the "gray letter" and what Betty had told her the afternoon Raoul Fernier had winged away, could mar the joy surging in her heart.

How wonderful their ecstatic flight above the puffy cloud squadrons that swam lazily across the morning!

Best of all, what a miracle it was to be beside Lance and to know their destiny depended upon his skill and courage. She had only to turn her gaze the least bit to have his gray eyes smile at her. Thayer was so surely the eagle of the north. The way he handled the ship, and the look of exultation in his bronzed, boyish face were proof of it.

A sense of dreaminess stole through Mariel. All life had become unreal since that night in the study at Six Trees, when Marshall Devoe had told her she was not his daughter. The unreality had increased when Lance snatched her from the boiling rapids and she had climbed from a well of darkness to find herself within his arms.

They flew on, climbing until the rarefied air made Mariel's heart hasten its beat; then dropping lower to enable Thayer to train his binoculars upon the ragged treeline of the woodlands. Once he thought he detected a spiral of smoke, and circled low to find its meaning. But it proved to be the fire of some campers who had pitched tents near a waterfall. They waved a blanket in salute and the plane went on.

From the position of the sun, Mariel knew it was almost noon when they made a landing. Far up the Loup Chain of lakes, where the mountains were bald and stark, Thayer expertly throttled the engine down and made a perfect landing in a valley's wide and untrammeled clearing.

"I've landed here once or twice before. Tired?" he asked, helping her alight. "You don't realize how stiff you get when you're flying."

Mariel looked around her with interest. A silver, minstrel stream gushed over sun-painted rocks. The side of one mountain marched greenly down to join another. It was warm there, and the foliage had taken on the

ruddy, colorful tints of Indian Summer.

"Isn't it pretty? So quiet and peaceful!" she exclaimed. "Lance, fetch the basket I brought with me. Betty and I made a lunch."

Dreaminess stole over Mariel—she knew only that Lance was beside her

"I brought one, too," he confessed. "We shall dine royally."

THEY found a spot in the shade of some spruce. Mariel laid a linen cloth over a mossy table. She unpacked her basket, adding what she had brought to the viands Thayer placed on the cloth. There was a thermos filled with a chilled fruit punch, a noble chocolate cake, dozens of dainty sandwiches, and the crisp gleam of a salad.

It was huge fun. The young aviator pretended they were dining at the Ritz. He summoned imaginary waiters, applauded an imaginary gypsy orchestra, and commented upon the invisible guests in the dining room. Mariel, happier than she had been in weeks, matched his humor. And then, all too soon, the luncheon was over.

She cleansed the thermos in the gurgling stream, repacked the basket and had Thayer return it to the plane. He stretched out beside her on the moss, lighted a cigarette, and watched a butterfly wing lazily past.

"Late in the season for butterflies," he observed. "The natives up here have a saying that when you see them at this time of year it means a long, mild autumn."

Mariel let her glance encounter his.

"Up to a very short time ago," she murmured, "I was a butterfly. All that

interested me was jazzy good times, excitement, crazy, happy things."

"What changed you?"

She shook her head, linking her hands about her rounded knees.

"That's what I can't tell you."

Thayer flung his cigarette away and held her gaze with his own.

"I love you. I know you have some good reason for not telling me what stands in our way. I'm trying to be patient. Some day—"

"You really don't know anything at all about me, Lance. Suppose—suppose I was not Marshall Devoe's daughter?"

"I wish you weren't!" he surprised her by replying. "Then I would have a better chance. You, Devoe's daughter and I, a flyer for the patrol: how can I dare to care for you as I do?"

Against the ardent look in his face Mariel shut her eyes.

"Don't — say things like that, Lance!"

He moved closer to her. The cool strength of his hands over her own made her tremble.

"Mariel! Whatever it is that stands between us will disappear some time. We're young and we're in love! Won't you tell me once that you do love me?"

She opened her eyes, unable to resist his appeal.

"But—"

"Say it! Say, 'Lance—'"

"L-Lance!"

"'I love you!'"

Mariel's breath caught in her throat. Once she had imagined that Raoul Fernier was the only man in the world capable of arousing and stirring her. How far away the memory of Raoul had retreated! His kiss and his embrace were lost things in this new tide of longing.

"Say it, Mariel!"

"I—love—you!" she faltered.

Once more she shut her eyes; shut them the better to feel his young strength inclose her and his breath steal her own breathing. Then she knew his kisses—slow, soft kisses that gave her heart a hurt sweeter than delight. The little wind that danced down the valley was an Aladdin summoning their dreams and laying them before them in the sun brightness.

Mariel's new, exultant happiness made her delight in his caresses. It was folly to struggle against love. To-morrow she might wake to realize that while she had settled the question of Raoul Fernier, the problem of her identity was still there to thrust iron bars between them. To-morrow she might have to know anguish, but at this moment life was wonderful and murmurous, drugging her with its enchanted spell; in the wonder of it she lost herself completely.

Lance Thayer seemed to have become an abashed boy. With tender fingers Mariel tumbled the rough hair she had looked upon the day he had carried her across the marsh. They drew close for still another kiss, and then, like frightened children, they faced each other, breathless, flushed, with starry eyes.

"Mariel! A love like ours must last forever! No matter what troubles you have now, everything is going to come out right!"

"Yes, everything!" she heard herself answering.

The panther dusk of the autumn day was upon them before they were halfway back to Long Lake. The sky became a blue garden in which the white forget-me-nots of the stars blossomed. The moon rocked in the cradle of the clouds. They flew on, the motor roaring a silken song.

Presently Mariel glimpsed familiar territory below her.

All at once her happiness and the white-hot ecstasy that had been almost too great to bear fell away. She was face to face with her problems again. How could she let Betty be engaged to Raoul Fernier? Raoul, certainly, could not love her sister. How could the man say what he had said to her, and then, only a few moments later, ask Betty to marry him?

Because of the type of machine that Thayer had used on the day's journey, they could not land on the surface of the lake. He sighted the beacon at the patrol flying field and brought the plane down. Two of Thayer's friends in the service hurried out to meet them and assisted Mariel to alight.

"You'd better get your report in, Lance," one of them said to Thayer. "I'm off duty, and the colonel's car is outside. I'll take Miss Devoe down to the camp."

So the enchanted day ended with the lingering pressure of Thayer's hand on her own. She climbed into the waiting motor car with Gilbert Carson, Lance's buddy, and turned her face to the darkness of the road that ran into the Devoe property.

"GOOD flight?" Carson asked. "It would be," he went on, "with Lance at the stick. How Thayer can fly a boat! I hope he makes good. There are a lot of people who think he's been boasting."

"About capturing the Black Star?"

"That's it," Carson replied. "Colonel Roberts sent him out a couple of times after the air raider and Lance fell down on the job. Who wouldn't? Anyway, I guess he got mad. He vowed then and there to get the Black Star some day. He will, too!"

"I'm sure of it!" Mariel cried softly.

"Seeing that we believe in him," Carson told her seriously, "I guess Lance doesn't care what other folks say. His buddy and his best girl—who else matters?"

"What makes you think I'm his best girl?"

Gilbert Carson laughed.

"Until you happened along you couldn't get Lance within a hundred yards of a pretty girl. Now he goes around in a sort of trance and gets special permission from the old man—Colonel Roberts, begging his pardon—to take you on a patrol flight. You don't have to be a Sherlock Holmes to put two and two together and make four."

The lights of the pulp mills and those in the windows of the barrack buildings blossomed out of the darkness.

The car stopped near the wharf. Mariel thanked Carson.

"I hope I didn't inconvenience you any."

"It was a great pleasure. Want me to row you out to the island?"

"Oh, no thanks. I'm quite an expert with the oars. Good night, and thanks again, Mr. Carson."

"Call me Gil," he requested. "Same as Lance and my other pals."

"Good night, Gil," Mariel said, and they both laughed.

The skiff was where she had left it that morning. Since the episode of the rapids and her rescue out of the grasping fingers of disaster Mariel had kept away from canoes. She untied the mooring line, climbed in and fitted the oars to the locks. When she pushed off she hesitated a minute.

Should she go back and learn whether MacIntosh had had any word

The light fell full upon a figure that lay face down!

from her father? Since the dreaded Black Star had stolen his letter, she had been worried about Marshall Devoe. If the menace of Six Trees had so easily followed them to Long Lake it was not unreasonable to assume it could strike at Devoe in Canada.

The office beyond the blacksmith shop was in darkness. Perhaps Big Mac had gone to his own quarters and retired. Possibly, Mariel thought, Betty had received word during the day.

She dipped her oars into the shadowed surface of the lake and pulled for the island. The cold of the night crouched beside her. The moon was hidden behind gathering clouds, and the glow of the stars was dim.

Mariel's sojourn at Long Lake had brought back an old familiarity with her surroundings. It was no task to find the island in the brooding, velvet darkness. She pulled lustily on the oars, rounded the bend, and in a few minutes was tying the skiff up at the crib dock.

THE shack, when she turned to face it, was in total darkness. That was peculiar, because Betty always waited up for her. Mariel shrugged away her doubts and ascended the porch steps. The door was unlocked and opened to her touch. Inside, she lighted a lamp, frowning at the cold fireplace where the embers of last night's blaze were charred and useless.

"Betty!"

There was no answer. Only the eerie echoes of her own voice returned in elfin cadence.

Thoroughly alarmed, Mariel held the lamp high and entered the bedroom. The door to it stood ajar as Betty usually left it, but there was no Betty to sit drowsily up in bed and speak her name. The bed itself was untouched. Across, on a peg, Betty's bright red felt hat was a splash of color in the lamplight.

"Betty!"

Mariel strained her ears. Once more the echoes returned. Fear forged a cold, unreasoning band of terror about

her heart. She rested against the frame of the door, trembling and uncertain. Where was Betty? What had happened to her?

Mariel set the lamp down on the table and searched the living room for a clew. If all was right, Betty would have left a message. Her gaze darted to the mantel over the fireplace, to the table, the walls, and the chairs. Everything was in order, but there was no communication from her sister in evidence.

While she stood with parted lips and wide eyes, Mariel remembered the Indian that Big Mac had sent over to their camp. Quickly, snatching up the electric torch from the mantel, she switched on its yellow beam. The well back of which Joe Fourfeathers pitched his tent was less than a hundred yards distant. Heedless of the cold, Mariel hurried toward it.

Eagerly she pulled the flap aside and darted the inquisitive eye of the torch into the tent. A single glance was sufficient. No explanation awaited her there. The tent was as desolate and empty as the shanty!

With chattering teeth Mariel sought desperately to control her harried emotions. If only Lance were there to help her! But Lance wasn't—Thayer was far away, and there was no telephone to summon him. Courageously Mariel steadied herself and endeavored to think clearly.

Some harm had befallen Betty. The Indian was concerned in it likewise. But what was it? Had the menace of Six Trees lived up to the threats in the gray letters? Had the Black Star come to earth to wreak a mysterious vengeance?

Mariel shaped a course back toward the shack. The distant shine of the lamp was a friendly guide. She had taken hardly a dozen steps before she stopped with a cry, strangled and involuntary.

The torch she used to illumine the path back to the shanty fell upon a figure that lay face down! It was the figure of Joe Fourfeathers. Her heart turned sick within her.

"Joe!"

She had difficulty in recognizing her own stricken, whispering tones. Breathlessly dreading the ordeal, but bravely facing it, she knelt beside the Indian and turned him over. There was a cruel gash across his forehead, and his eyes were closed, but hope lashed her blood fiercely when she heard a thin moan and saw his eyes open heavily.

"Joe!" In her frantic eagerness Mariel grasped his arm. "What happened? Tell me, Joe! *Where is Betty?"*

Weakly, as one dazed, the Indian tried to answer. His voice was little more than a broken whisper. He was barely able to mumble two words before his eyes shut and he lapsed once more into unconsciousness.

"Betty," Mariel heard him say, *"—gone!"*

CHAPTER VIII

IN some fashion Mariel got the Indian into the shanty. She bathed and dressed the wound in his forehead as well as she could with the contents of the first aid kit her father had thoughtfully provided. Joe Fourfeathers was still unconscious, but his pulse beat was fairly regular and his breathing slow and deep.

Helping another had helped Mariel. Most of her confusion vanished when she had finished arranging the bandage. Her course was clear and open,

now. She must get back to the mainland, summon help, and then enlist the services of Lance Thayer in her search for Betty.

Lance would not fail her! Thayer had vowed to capture the Black Star, and it was the dreaded air pirate who had made off with her sister!

Leaving the lamp lighted, Mariel hurried down to the dock. In the skiff she set her oars to the night and rowed to the mill camp. It was a hard pull against the nipping wind that came tumbling down from the dark mountains, but she hardly felt the sting of it. On nervous, hurried feet she drew the skiff up on the shore and ran toward the barrack buildings.

Jab MacIntosh immediately sent the mill doctor with a party to the island. Then, in his office, he faced Mariel grimly.

"This is bad business, lassie. I don't know what your father will think of us here, letting his youngest daughter be stolen right from under our eyes. Come to think of it, I remember hearing a plane just after sunset."

Sunset? That was hours past. In the elapsing time Betty could be leagues distant!

"We must find her!" Mariel cried desperately. "Take me to Patrol Headquarters! Lance will know what to do!"

Big Mac shook his head. He reached for the telephone on his desk.

"Better still, I'll call Colonel Roberts." He made the call while Mariel hung breathlessly on his conversation. There was just enough of it to make her heart sink slowly. MacIntosh returned the receiver to its hook and dropped a kindly hand to her shoulder. "Young Thayer left an hour ago. Some one brought in information about the Black Star. He couldn't wait until morning, Thayer couldn't. He left to investigate—"

Mariel dropped limply into a chair. She had been so confident of Lance's assistance! And he was gone — was winging a way through the dark shoals of night.

"What can I do, Mac?"

"Go back to the island and wait until dawn," MacIntosh advised. "The colonel promised to send three planes out immediately. There's nothing to be done until it's light. You can just wait and hope."

"Wait and hope!" Mariel repeated dully.

Wearily she pulled herself together and walked down to the wharf with Big Mac. Two of the men had the skiff ready to row her back. MacIntosh seated himself beside her in the stern, and for the third time that night Mariel went across the cold, black expanse of water.

At the shanty she found Joe Fourfeathers propped up on the couch in the small living room. He had regained consciousness, but was pale and weak. The mill doctor drew Mariel aside.

"I wouldn't talk to him now. He has told us enough of what happened. It was after sunset; the Indian heard the plane come down, but thought nothing of it. Said he imagined it was you returning in a patrol machine. Pretty soon your sister screamed. The Indian picked up his gun and hurried toward the shanty. Midway, something struck him and he remembered nothing more."

Mariel shut her eyes and shuddered. She needed no vivid imagination to reconstruct the entire drama. The Black Star, masked like the hooded prowler at Six Trees. Betty blithely receiving him, thinking it was Lance Thayer and

herself returning. The man's clutching hands. And then the black machine rising from the night-ridden lake and hurling her into the far spaces of an unknown destination.

"Lance!" Mariel whispered to herself. "Oh, Lance! We must find her!"

THROUGH her anguished tide of distress she suddenly heard the bee hum of an approaching aëroplane. Mariel, on the porch of the shanty, stiffened. At the same moment the clouds hiding the bright face of the moon parted. Long Lake was bathed in a silver glow, while against the sky a plane took shape, flying low and fast.

Lance!

With her heart throbbing, Mariel hurried down to the dock. Was it Lance? Or would it be one of the other patrol flyers bringing information concerning Betty? In any event the oncoming messenger of the air seemed a harbinger of hope.

Closer and closer. Mariel almost allowed her pent up feelings to escape in a glad cry of relief. The plane circled above her, dipped and began a spiral descent with its engine throttled down to a velvety purr.

It was a hydro, and a familiar one, but instead of being white the moonlight silvered its gray fuselage when it landed with a showering splash and floated in to the dock. Mariel tightened her hands.

Raoul Fernier!

The French aviator climbed out, and a minute later was beside her. Mariel forgot all that had occurred on the occasion of his last visit. In the suave, worldly Fernier she saw help, assistance. Surely he would aid her, help find the dark-haired, laughing-eyed girl whose hand he had asked in marriage.

"Raoul! Betty is gone!" Mariel cried, and poured out the whole story. "Help me find her! We must do something! The moon is out, now, and we can see! Raoul, please—"

Fernier gripped her arm.

"We will find her! Together, you and I! I am at your service. Come, we will start at once!"

Strapping on a helmet and struggling into the leather coat Fernier held for her, Mariel took her place in the cockpit beside him. The motor of the gray hydro roared.

When he had gained sufficient altitude, Fernier straightened out the plane and headed west. Wide-eyed and tense, Mariel sat beside him.

On the gray plane flew—toward the dimming stars and the silver valley of the moon while Mariel strained her eyes for a glimpse of another plane below or above them.

WILL BETTY BE FOUND? WILL HER DISCOVERY REVEAL THE SECRET OF THE GRAY LETTERS AND MARIEL'S IDENTITY? WATCH FOR THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF THIS EXCITING STORY AND FOLLOW MARIEL INTO—

The Substitute Lover

Which goes to prove that sometimes in the game of love second thoughts are best!

By Ethel Curtis Gaffney

"HURRY, daughter, the car is coming!"

"I'm ready!" And the lips of a laughing face framed in gold hair topped with a scarlet tam, planted a quick little kiss on the top of a nicely powdered nose.

"By-by. We'll be back in no time, mother dear. Golly, but I'm happy!"

Mrs. Herrick stood watching as the girl sped on swift feet to the corner. Presently, when the long, yellow car had moved off down the street and she had waved a last, fluttering good-by, Mrs. Herrick hurried indoors to see that everything was actually ready for the coming guest.

Dale had met Peter Goring at the Prom Ball in Rockmont, where the Harley U. boys held forth. There had been that one exciting week, the only week she had spent away from home, filled to the brim with all the wonderful things the young college crowd did.

Peter was the sort of young man that every girl meets because she wants to more than anything else in the world. In each university there is always one young man who seems to be the darling of the gods. It was so with Peter Goring. A rich man's son, scion of one of the oldest families in Virginia, handsome and popular—that was Peter. He was markedly the idol

of the U. football team, and admittedly its best player. That in itself would have earned the adoration of the majority of the girls.

Peter had crisp black hair, the unruly sort that women love to fondle; blue eyes with a devil-may-care expression in their languorous depths and flashing white teeth that were constantly in display. His colleagues thought him a little "matinée-idolish" in looks and manner—but not so the girls.

There were several broken hearts to Peter's credit. He had a fascinating habit of selecting one girl and paying her ardent attention; with such passion that it was more than any feminine heart could do to withstand his wooing. For the time being, sometimes a short time, sometimes a longer time, the selected girl was made to feel that she was the one and only beautiful thing in creation. It was a delightful feeling.

In the four years he had lived in Rockmont, however, most of the girls had come to know Peter. They took his wooing philosophically, as they took his gifts.

When Peter met Dale Herrick he did not know that Dale was a different sort of a girl. He only knew that she was by far the most attractive bit of woman flesh he had ever met. He loved her bright innocence, her spontaneous laughter. Dale, during her short visit, was as popular as she could wish. She had several "crushes," was invited to more affairs during the day and night than she could possibly attend.

"WHERE in the world have you been all my life?" Peter inquired the moment he met her, plowing through a six deep circle of seniors, sophomores, and one or two professors to get to her.

Dale lifted eager, shining, golden eyes and took him in in one quick glance.

"Why—I guess—I've been waiting for you?" she said, and laughed up at him impudently.

That settled it. Peter was once again in love.

The rest of the crowd knew what that meant, and with shrugged shoulders gave way to him. No use bucking the line when Peter was in the game.

It was a glorious week. Dale had come home with her head in the clouds, yet a little sobered by the wonderful thing that had come to her.

It took a few days before she could tell her mother.

"Mother," she began one evening, "while I was in Rockmont, I—met a man. His name is Peter."

Her mother caught her breath sharply.

"Yes, Dale."

"And do you know—I believe I fell in love with him."

She turned swiftly, her young face ablaze with blushes and threw her arms about her mother.

"Oh, Dale. Are you sure?"

"Yes. Mother, he is the most wonderful man in the world."

Of course Mrs. Herrick knew that.

"But, Dale," she said helplessly, "you've met so few men. Don't you think you'd better—wait a little while longer?"

"Oh, we're not going to be married until Peter is out of school, and that's a whole year," she cried.

TWO months passed. There had been letters. At first they came every day, blazing letters filled with a fiery, undying passion. They had made Dale's heart flutter suffocatingly.

And then, when several disappointing days passed without any word at all, he wrote, begging her forgiveness, telling her that he was working so hard to end his last year so he could come for her.

After that they dwindled down to an occasional note, but Dale, believing in him, trusting him, did not mind very much. She went about singing joyfully, even though there were times when her gay heart was hurt and wondering at the long silence.

If Mrs. Herrick wondered at his inattentiveness she did not mention it.

And then came the wonderful news that the Harley U. boys were to give their annual play at Northport that year.

Dale got a brief note from Peter, saying that he would be there, and she immediately wired him an invitation to spend the time with her and her mother. That had been two days before, and though they were arriving that day, no answering wire had come.

"Maybe he isn't coming after all, dear," her mother said at breakfast.

Dale looked up, her eyes shining happily.

"Oh, yes, he will, mother. He's probably just too busy with rehearsals and all to wire. He'll be expecting me to meet him."

Mrs. Herrick said nothing. She moved about the charming little room, arranging the flowers again and again.

"I do wish we had a car," Dale was saying. "I hate to have him take a taxi."

"You didn't let Peter think we were rich, darling."

"Of course not," she replied quickly. "In fact, I don't think I had time to tell him anything much about us."

"There—run along and dress. The train is due at ten. Look your prettiest, honey, and hurry home so I can meet your Prince Charming."

THE big, genial-faced engineer brought the Southern Special into the great station slowly. Passing by the long platform with clanging bell and stertorous puffings, he smiled down into the eager upturned faces of gayly attired young girls assembled to meet the incoming train.

Though she strained her eyes ever so hard, and stood on tiptoe watching each little group that passed her by, in some way Dale missed Peter. Her gay little face beneath its crimson hat grew suddenly pale and panic-stricken. Just suppose that after all he had not come? What would her mother say?

It was when she heard Marcia Gracie's rather shrill voice behind her that she moved quickly away. She had never liked Marcia. It was her half sneering manner of patronizing her, Dale thought.

Of course Marcia was the richest girl in town; but Dale Herrick was the proudest! She simply could not have stood Marcia's seeing her and calling out: "Well, Dale, and who might you be waiting for?" So with a little shudder she hastily walked away from the hurrying groups, still watching anxiously, however, for the one face she was longing so to see.

She turned back again in a moment to see if Marcia had gone. And then she saw a tall young chap coming directly toward her. He had the inevitable coon-skin coat and the gray Fedora with the droopy insouciant brim.

To Dale he was just another college boy—some one who would know about Peter. She ran to him, lifting her golden eyes with an eager, anxious look.

Involuntarily the young man stopped.

"Did—didn't Peter Goring come?" she asked him quickly. He was staring down at her in startled fashion.

"Peter Goring?" he questioned blankly.

"Yes—on the train," she explained impatiently. "Aren't you with the Harley U. boys?"

"Why, no, I'm not," he answered, "but I seem to remember Goring. A tall, handsome chap—quite dark?"

Dale's face lit up. "That description would fit a lot of them. But somehow I feel that you must mean Peter. Then he did come."

"Now that I think of it," the young man said, "I seem to remember them calling this chap Peter. He was to meet some girl—the boys were teasing him about it."

"Oh!" Dale's face paled. "Why—how terrible. I—I've looked ever so carefully and I have missed him."

"So you are Marcia?" he smiled at her in a comradely way.

"MARCIA?" she repeated, staring at him with startled eyes. "No—I'm the girl they were teasing him about. I'm Dale."

"Dale?" He looked mystified.

"Yes—Dale Herrick." Then, a little proudly, "Peter and I are engaged."

An odd look flashed across the young man's face.

"Oh," he said slowly, "I see. Well—I'm sorry you missed him. No doubt he will show up at your home, Miss Herrick. Can I be of any assistance—give you a lift? My car is waiting, I think."

"Thank you so very much," she answered gratefully. "I will let you take me home. Perhaps he took a taxi." Her face brightened.

The man walked beside her in silence—a rather thoughtful silence. A tall, yellow negro sprang forward as he approached the top of the steps.

"Howdy, Mr. Bruce," he exclaimed, smiling broadly; "glad to see you come home, sah."

"Thanks, Joe." He handed the smiling servant his bags.

Dale felt herself drawn toward a long, low-swung roadster, and with startled eyes turned to look more carefully at her companion.

"Why, I know who you are!" she exclaimed suddenly. "You're Bruce Pendleton, the son of Judge Pendleton. You've just come home from Harvard."

"Right you are," the young man replied, smiling; "you've got the low-down on me."

As he started the car:

"You've forgotten the servant," she cried.

"He just brought my car down. The footman will take him home in the other car with the luggage," he answered indifferently.

Sitting back in the deep, luxurious seat, Dale gave herself up to day-dreaming. How wonderful it would be to own a fine car like this and to be able to talk so easily of footmen and other cars. Some day, she knew, when she and Peter were married, a few of these things would be hers. She hoped that Peter would beat her home so he would meet her mother informally.

She was brought out of her reverie by the sound of Bruce Pendleton's voice.

"I have only been home twice in the last four years, but it seems to me that I should have met you," he said.

Dale glanced up at his grave face quickly.

"Just twice in four years?" she repeated. "What have you been doing?"

"Roaming around. The world's a wonderful place. I've been around it twice, but I haven't seen half enough." He looked down at her. "I'm going over to Bermuda in February. Used to think I'd save that trip for my honeymoon—but it looks as though I'm going to have to wait too long to find the girl. Where do you live?"

"Not far from your home," she replied. Then she added quietly: "I don't run around with your crowd. You see, mother and I are alone—and we are not rich."

"As if that mattered," he scoffed. "I've seen all of the rich people I care to. I'm hunting interesting people these days. I think you're interesting, and I hope you'll let me come and see you."

Dale blushed. "But don't you remember that I am engaged?" she asked.

"That's so. I had forgotten." Again that odd look flashed across his face. "Tell me—where did you meet that chap Peter Goring?"

"When I visited in Rockmont several months ago," and before she knew it she was telling him everything. He was easy to confide in. The time passed swiftly; she was surprised when he stopped the car in front of her modest cottage home.

Bruce Pendleton looked at the flushed face and shining eyes of this lovely girl, and across his mind flashed a sudden determination. He had opened his lips to speak when he saw standing beside him a beautiful middle-aged woman—plainly Dale's mother.

"Oh, mother!" Dale cried in an excited little voice.

Her mother interrupted her quickly. "Yes, darling." She held out her slim white hand graciously, her lovely face lit with a charming smile. "And so this is Peter! I'm so glad to know you, Peter. You are exactly the kind of man I've been hoping you would be. Jump down—both of you—luncheon is waiting. You've been such a long time."

DALE'S crimsoning cheeks grew more crimson; her horrified eyes met Bruce's. He flashed her a quick warning look. Then with rather a happy smile touching his lips and a mischievous one in the depth of his fine dark eyes, Bruce Pendleton leaped to the ground and, hat in hand, took Mrs. Herrick's hand in his warm clasp.

"It's so kind of you, Mrs. Herrick," he said. "Dale and I didn't mean to be late." He opened the car door for Dale and helped her to alight.

Too surprised to offer a remonstrance and too dazed by the fact that Peter had not come after all, Dale suffered herself to be led into the house. Bruce kept Mrs. Herrick busy talking and laughing, covering Dale's confusion easily. But once inside Mrs. Herrick left them to see about her biscuits and she swung on him.

"How dared you—how dared you," she stormed, "deceive mother like that? What will she think—what will she say? And supposing Peter—does come after all?"

"If he does, Dale," Bruce told her quietly, "I'll tell your mother the truth. And if he doesn't—well—you won't need to take the painful trouble to admit it to her. There's no use hurting her. And after all you have your own pride."

The word "pride" stiffened her. Dale's little head went up in a haughty gesture. "After all—why not?" she agreed. "Peter would only be here for the show to-night and the dance afterward. I can make some excuse

about the dance—and I—I just can't tell her that he didn't come. Can I?"

Bruce shook his head. "And so far as the dance is concerned—why don't you go with me? No doubt he'll be there; and wouldn't it be rather a decent way to get back at him?"

Dale thought about it for a moment. Her lips were trembling; her golden eyes filled with quick tears.

"But to see him there with some one else," she murmured brokenly. "You see—I happen to care a lot about him."

Involuntarily Bruce slipped an arm about her. Mrs. Herrick, passing the door, saw the momentary tableau and smiled softly.

"Poor little girl," Bruce was whispering, "poor little Dale. But really, if you think you could hold out long enough to appear, I'd be so glad—for those fellows on the train—" He stopped lamely.

Dale's head came up swiftly. "Well? What were they saying?"

"Nothing much, Dale, honest." He did not notice that he was calling her by name as though he had known her always. "Just the usual light remarks about a fellow's affairs. But—if you could go it might make them think it was you who turned him down—see? You'd know how to manage it better than I. I'll play up too. How about it?"

"But your father—won't he be expecting you?"

"Father won't be here until to-morrow night," Bruce answered quickly. "I was a little early because I cut a big dance. There—your mother is calling us to luncheon. Will you go?"

"All right," she answered slowly, "I will—and of course you know how much I appreciate—" She choked.

For just an instant her grateful, unhappy eyes met his, then forcing a gayety she did not feel, she led Bruce into the small flower-filled dining room and to the tempting luncheon Mrs. Herrick had prepared.

"AND what are you children going to do this afternoon?" Mrs. Herrick questioned as they sat together in the swing after luncheon.

"We are going to take you for a long ride in the country," Bruce announced at once. "Let's pack a picnic basket and eat on the banks of the river. I can come home about six and dress—and come and get you folks for the show." He turned to Mrs. Herrick who was regarding him with pleased, happy eyes.

"I'd love the ride, but won't I be in the way?"

"In the way?" Bruce echoed quickly, "well hardly. I'm going to have little enough time with you as it is," he went on. Dale threw a suddenly hostile look at him.

"But I'm not going with you to the show," her mother said. "I have a headache and besides you are going to the dance." Bruce did not press this point and after a moment she disappeared into the house to prepare the lunch.

"You needn't play up quite so hard," Dale said to Bruce. Then, "You'll have mother liking you."

"That's what I want her to do," he answered promptly. "I like her too."

"But you'll make it harder for me afterward," Dale cried sharply, "how can I explain to her why I am not going to marry you?"

"Perhaps you won't have to," he answered enigmatically.

The reappearance of Mrs. Herrick cut off Dale's question and in the hours that followed she forgot about it. Dale was happy in her mother's frank en-

joyment of the afternoon. After all—it was nice of him—a perfect stranger—to have helped her out of her terrible dilemma. And then to have given her mother, deliberately, a picnic in the woods—Dale felt doubly indebted to him.

Over her shoulder she could see the triumphant look of Marcia

DALE dressed for the dance that night in a fever of excitement. She was glad that she had a new frock and that it was tremendously becoming. She did not know why she had chosen black lace except that she knew it made her fair skin seem so much fairer and that it gave an added crimson to her lips and deeper shadows to her already shadowed golden eyes. The black satin slippers with the diamond studded heels were an extravagance that Mrs. Herrick had insisted upon.

And so Dale wrapped herself in the exotic loveliness of her mother's old Chinese red shawl and tucked a red gardenia under one ear.

It was a vision so charming that Bruce Pendleton caught his breath when she walked into the dainty living room and confronted him. He wanted to put his arms about her, and rather fiercely told her so when they entered the great gray car.

"Please," Dale implored him, "don't forget that I'm being ever so grateful to you for everything, Mr. Pendleton, but that I'm terribly in love with Peter. I think I shall die when I see him to-night—dancing with Marcia Gracie. Of course Marcia is beautiful and rich—and the leader of the young crowd here—but I hoped that Peter loved me just for myself."

His voice sounded firm in the close darkness.

"Dale, you're not the girl I think you are if you don't go into that ballroom and flirt with every man who'll look at you. If I were in your place I bet I'd have him standing on his head before the evening was past."

Dale smiled tragically. "He is too used to doing that to other folks," she said. "He knows how and I don't."

"You can't tell me that," Bruce answered. "Any girl who knows how to get herself up as stunningly as you have to-night, knows the art of being seductive. I'm in this and I'm going to play the game. I'll be the most ardent lover you ever had—and I can be convincing!"

IN the crowded cloak room Dale laid aside her crimson shawl and dusted a little powder on her flaming cheeks. It was then that she heard the shrill voice of Marcia Gracie.

"Do hurry, Ann, Peter's waiting for me! He's going to give me the most gorgeous bracelet—wait until you see it. I told him I was simply dying for one and he said he couldn't let me die yet awhile. And look at my orchids—aren't they wonderful?"

Dale felt herself grow blindly sick. Her cheeks went pale. Before the mirror she put up a trembling hand to hide their tell-tale whiteness; then, remembering Bruce's warning, she lifted her head and with a nonchalance she was far from feeling and dashed on some rouge. Over her shoulder she could see the veiled triumphant looks of Marcia and her little bunch.

"Why there's Dale Herrick!" Marcia cried as though she had just seen her.

"Hello, Marcia," Dale responded coolly.

"Who brought you, Dale?" The curious voice followed her as she swung toward the door. It was honey sweet in spite of its half-sneering inflection.

"Bruce Pendleton," she answered, and looked properly surprised at the question. She saw the swift looks that passed between the little group and with her first feeling of satisfied triumph Dale went hastily out of the door.

As she ran lightly down the steps she could see in the upturned faces below several of the Harley U. boys whom she knew. By the time she reached the bottom step a little group had congregated to meet her.

"'Lo, Dale old thing," one or two called. She held out her lovely ringless hand and greeted them with charming smiles. And then she saw Bruce over the heads of the group.

There was something in his eye that held her suddenly motionless; a look of admiration and wonder. Dale's heart gave a queer flutter and then stood quite as oddly still.

For a long moment their eyes clung together; then with an effort she called, "Come and get me, Bruce—I'm surrounded."

Bruce plowed through the circle with playful roughness.

Dale laid a hand on his arm.

"Jim—Timothy—this is Bruce Pendleton, Harvard '26."

The boys stared.

Bruce Pendleton's name was very well known to those of them who were football fans. This tall, broad-shouldered chap was the picture of a football hero. There was a curious look of envy in Jimmy Morton's young eyes.

Suddenly Dale saw Peter.

He was bearing down upon the little crowd with his usual arrogant confidence. Dale had a swift feeling of panic, her fingers gripped Bruce's arm tightly. He looked up quickly and in the glitter of her eyes and the forced gayety of her smile read correctly what the clinging grip on his arm meant.

"Why hello, Dale?" he heard Peter's low, rich voice.

Dale turned a pair of surprised eyes upon him.

"Oh—Peter," she answered coolly, "you here, too?"

She turned her eyes up to meet Bruce's tender ones.

"Come on, Bruce—let's go."

PETER GORING'S handsome face flushed. His dark eyes followed her a little stupidly. One or two of the boys snickered.

The sound made Dale feel physically ill. She wanted to turn back quickly and beg his forgiveness. That glimpse of his handsome face, his eager eyes had sent all of the blood in her being to her heart, but the thought of Marcia and the orchids and the diamond bracelet waiting in his pocket to be placed on her arm, together with all of the other little hurts, rose up before her, and with bright little head a shade higher and hot dry eyes she went with Bruce to the room where the sound of snappy, syncopated music wrapped her around like a scarlet cloak.

It seemed odd to be dancing with Bruce Pendleton. And it seemed odder still that she felt that she had known him always, instead of having met him only a few short hours before.

Bruce was a clever dancer. Occasionally his dark eyes would meet her own, sending the blood to her cheeks and a quick little quiver over her. He was playing his part well—exceedingly well. It seemed unfair for her to accept his gallantry, giving him in return nothing but the rather pitiful reiteration that she loved Peter Goring.

The encore over they turned and approached the wide terrace. Peter was there. He walked deliberately over to Dale and somewhat preëmptorily took her card.

"Dale, you've got to give me a dance," his blue eyes met her own steadily.

Dale smiled up at him brilliantly. "I don't know whether there is one left."

"There is this one with Jimmy—I'll take it. Jimmy will understand."

Dale put up a weakly protesting hand, but Peter quite calmly lifted her to her feet and led her away from Bruce Pendleton whose dark eyes were narrowing in a dangerous fashion.

Dimly Dale sensed his displeasure, but before Peter's calm disposal of her partner and his rather arrogant disregard of her companion, Dale's will turned to water. She turned one quick pleading look in Bruce's direction and then suffered herself to be led away.

"We won't dance—because I've got to talk to you," he said. "Dale—why have you cut me so to-night?"

"Cut you?" she asked surprised. "Why, Peter, how silly."

"It's not silly. I thought you cared for me—that you loved me," he answered. "Or don't you remember saying that?"

"What about Marcia Gracie?"

"Well—I had to take some one," he cried. "You didn't even meet me at the train."

"Oh, yes, I did meet you," she told him quietly, "and what's more you know it. I know all about everything. A friend of mine overheard your conversation on the train. Whatever was between us is—over," her lips trembled. "I'm glad I found you out in time. That's all."

"You mean that you don't really care anything about me?"

"No, I don't mean that. I love you—I can't help it. You see, you're the first real love affair I've ever had. But I don't mean to see you any more—nor ever to hear of you or from you again."

"YOU can't mean that! Dale, darling, beautiful Dale," he cried. Suddenly his warm arms enfolded her. She tried to avoid his lips as they sought her own. "If I've hurt you—forgive me, dear. I did not know how precious you are. I haven't seen you in months and you didn't write very often."

"Write!" Dale pushed him back now with trembling hands. "Why, I wrote lots oftener than you did."

"But you know how hard I was working—that I hadn't any time to write—surely you understand." That softly pleading voice.

Dale felt it flow over her, envelop her senses like an opiate, deaden her reasoning, beat against that cool thing that was her mind and sweep like fire across her torn heart. She so wanted to believe him!

Suddenly she was crying. She turned her head and buried it against his broad breast.

"You do care—Dale?" The voice was triumphant now.

"I can't forgive you," she cried heartbrokenly, "you'll do it all over again."

"Do what, darling? Oh—you mean Marcia?" The confidence of his smoothly flowing voice! "Why, dearest, Marcia doesn't mean a thing in my young life. I promise you—Dale, dearest—I'll never see her again. There—now do I love you?" He lifted her face and kissed the tear wet eyes. "And you're going to send Bruce Pendleton away and let me take you home—you will, sweetheart?"

"If—you're—sure." She lifted her lips for his ardent kiss. He crushed her tightly in his arms for answer.

"I'll go and find him and send him here to you, and after you've dismissed him, let's go. What say?"

"But what about Marcia?" Dale asked as she withdrew herself.

"I'll get one of the other boys to take her. She's got all she wanted anyway—a diamond bracelet," the voice sounded harshly callous.

Dale shivered.

"Go and get your wrap and meet me here in ten minutes. I'll give Pendleton just that long," he spoke imperiously.

Dale's heart beat with a mad new hope. She nodded. In a few seconds she was back again, the scarlet shawl clutched tightly in her fingers.

For a long moment she stood there in the dim silver light that the young moon spilled so graciously upon her. Her lovely face lifted itself to the slender bow with ecstatic happiness written in every line. She loved and was beloved. What woman on earth could ask for more?

It was not until she turned her head that she became aware of Bruce Pendleton. He was standing beside her looking down at her, a yearning in his

gaze that held her breathless for an instant.

"Then I am to be dismissed?" he asked quietly.

Dale choked. "I'm so sorry," she began quickly, "you don't know how much I appreciate everything you have done. You've been—wonderful. I'll never forget you. But you see—I love Peter—I can't help it!"

He nodded.

The sudden sound of low angry voices near them made them both pause. Unconsciously Dale listened. There was something familiar—a girl's shrill voice was speaking.

"And you think I'm going to wait here for you while you take Dale Herrick home and then come back for me? Of all the nerve! Not that I'd mind Bruce Pendleton taking me home—what in the world she can see in you when she's got him—"

The voices died out.

Dale stood there, swaying back and forth. Suddenly with a little moan she crumpled to the floor.

A VERY long time afterward Dale opened her eyes wearily.

She was conscious of the movement of the car and turning her head slowly she saw that it was Bruce who was with her. His young face looked stern in the dim light.

Tears rolled down her pale face; she felt that her heart was indeed broken.

At the door he reached down and slipped an arm about her, carrying her lightly up the steps.

"Good night, little Dale," he said tenderly, "some day there is going to be another man, and I want you to remember that I am willing to be second choice. It's rather sudden—but I love you!"

"How can you," she cried miserably, "when I've treated you so!"

"Will you let me come to-morrow and tell you?" He leaned closer to her. "Dale, my father used always to tell me that a mended heart is stronger than a whole one. I believe it. Let's prove it!"

Dale's golden head drooped.

Bruce Pendleton smiled softly in the darkness.

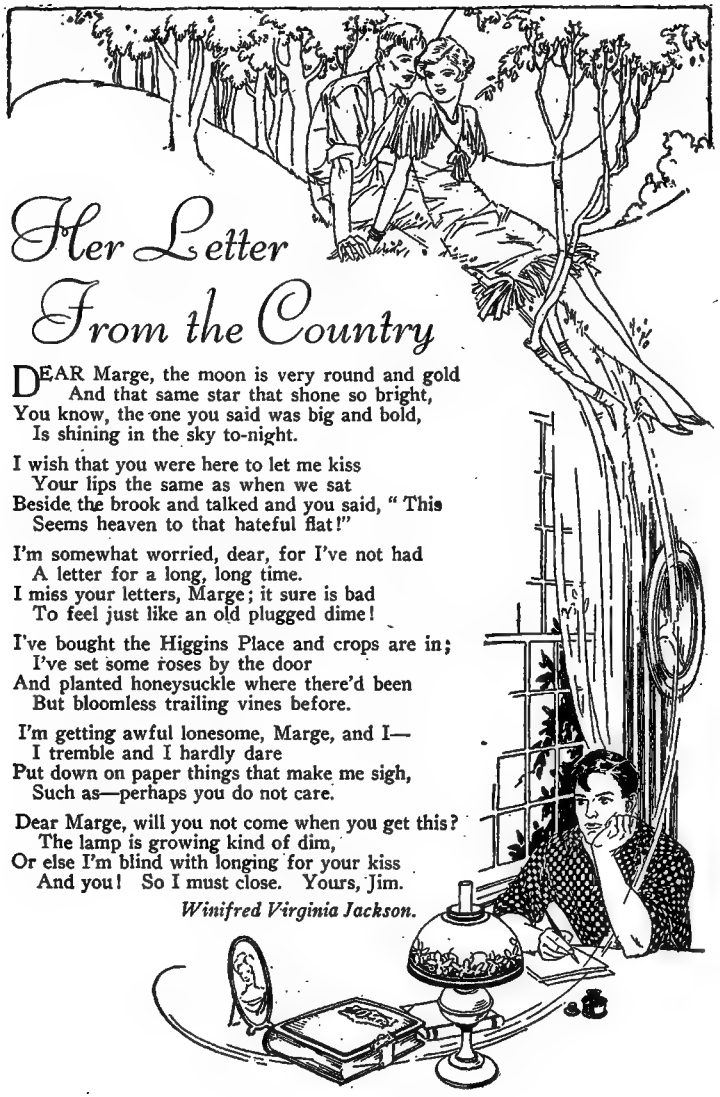
"We'll tell mother to-morrow and maybe she'll like your second choice too," he whispered.

"She thinks you're first."

"I will be before she knows the difference."

Dale made no reply.

Her silence was enough. He gathered her in his arms.



Her Letter From the Country

DEAR Marge, the moon is very round and gold
And that same star that shone so bright,
You know, the one you said was big and bold,
Is shining in the sky to-night.

I wish that you were here to let me kiss
Your lips the same as when we sat
Beside the brook and talked and you said, "This
Seems heaven to that hateful flat!"

I'm somewhat worried, dear, for I've not had
A letter for a long, long time.
I miss your letters, Marge; it sure is bad
To feel just like an old plugged dime!

I've bought the Higgins Place and crops are in;
I've set some roses by the door
And planted honeysuckle where there'd been
But bloomless trailing vines before.

I'm getting awful lonesome, Marge, and I—
I tremble and I hardly dare
Put down on paper things that make me sigh,
Such as—perhaps you do not care.

Dear Marge, will you not come when you get this?
The lamp is growing kind of dim,
Or else I'm blind with longing for your kiss
And you! So I must close. Yours, Jim.

Winifred Virginia Jackson.

Remembered

In which memory becomes reality and lost ecstasy is found

By Beulah Poynter

The dejected little figure on the prison bench did not turn

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

TO escape marriage with a man who does not attract her, Vivie Bowen becomes companion to wealthy Mrs. Craven, who takes her abroad. In Florence she meets and loves Glen Mellish, self-confessed artist, who tells her very little of himself. A mysterious woman, whom Vivie has seen on the train, haunts the lovers. One night she is seen by Vivie with Mellish, and later Mrs. Craven introduces her as Mrs. Drake, a new friend, with whom they are to travel to Venice. Mrs. Drake informs the girl that her stranger sweetheart is Lord Dunsford, who is traveling with his wife!

When Glen Mellish turns up in Venice the girl disdains him, and will listen to no explanation, especially as Mellish does not deny that he is married.

Later, the bag in which her employer keeps her jewels is rifled and the jewels stolen. Vivie is accused and arrested.

CHAPTER XI

MELLISH kicked viciously at the sand as he walked away from Vivie. He did not hear her sharp ejaculation when she discovered the loss of the bag. He was too angry with himself at losing his opportunity to tell her what was in his heart to hear anything but the furious pounding of thought waves in his brain.

Confound it, he hadn't intended to warn her about Adams—it was the last thing he should have done! He had wanted but one thing—to find out definitely and for all time whether she loved him.

Why hadn't he picked her up bodily and carried her away from that crowd? If she had ever really cared for him, he could certainly win back her love and trust.

There hadn't been a day or night since he first kissed her in the gardens that he hadn't tingled at the memory of her soft lips, the perfume of her glorious hair, the touch of her warm fingers. Strive as he would, he couldn't banish thoughts of those marvelous hours under blue Italian skies, nor push aside the hunger for her that ate into his very soul.

Of course she had been shocked at hearing another woman spoken of as his wife. Poor little girl! His heart had ached that night when he had been faced with the impossibility of denying

Rapture

the statement, but why had she refused his request for a meeting? Surely she must have known he could explain everything.

Why, after writing her—at the risk of ruining all his plans—just what his relations were to Lady Dunsford, had she still refused to see him?

LADY DUNSFORD was having tea on the balcony when Mellish reached his hotel. Probably for the first time since he had fallen so madly in love with Vivie, he really looked at another woman.

He suddenly realized that the blond girl in the yellow sport suit was amazingly attractive. This realization made his scowl darker than ever.

"Have tea?"

Lady Dunsford nodded toward a chair by the table.

"Thanks," gloomily.

"What's the matter? You look as stormy as a thundercloud."

"I've just discovered that you're a raving beauty."

"What!" She set her cup down with a laugh. "And that makes you unhappy?"

"I can't say it adds to my joy; for it occurs to me Vivie may have realized it before I did."

"Oh!" Lady Dunsford lifted her teacup again to her lips and peered at him over the brim of it, with twinkling eyes. "I see. However, dear boy, women rarely give other women credit for either brains or beauty." After a moment's silence: "Did you tell her I wasn't your wife; that there were absolutely no sentimental relations between us?"

"I wrote her that."

"I don't suppose there's a possibility she never read that letter?"

"I don't understand."

"My dear cousin, for a man who has knocked around the world as much as you have, who has the power of deduction you possess, you sometimes seem hopelessly stupid. If I were in your sweetheart's shoes, and suddenly learned that the man I loved had a young and charming wife, I would most certainly refuse to read any letters he might send me."

"I NEVER thought of that," Mellish said, moodily.

"Of course you didn't. And you've probably added insult to injury by vowing you loved her at every opportunity."

He nodded.

"If she's the girl you think she is, she wants no married man's affection."

"I believe you're right," he said, slowly.

"Personally—" Lady Dunsford studied a chameleon struggling up the stone wall beside her—"I don't think either of us deserves a medal for cleverness. We've wasted three months and haven't achieved anything. Of course you've found the one and only girl—but through stupidity you've lost her—"

"I haven't lost her," he interrupted violently. "And even if I'm a failure at everything else I attempt, I'm going to win her back."

"Good boy! Scale the balcony to her window. Break down the shutters and—" She laughed gayly.

"It's no laughing matter, Daisy. If it's a choice between the Chisholm diamonds and Vivie, Vivie wins every time. You don't seem to understand that I'm bowled over. I can't sleep. I can't eat. I can't think—and all because of your fool idea we could play the game better if we were Lady and *Lord* Dunsford."

"You should be flattered that I lent you my patrician name."

"Doubtless. But I've always been satisfied with my own."

"We won't squabble about that. Results are what count, and to date we've had none. Poor old Glen, you're on edge, but I understand. My word!" She closed her eyes for a moment. "It must be wonderful to be loved as you love that girl. What if you have had hard sailing—haven't I heard somewhere that love never did run smooth? Cheer up. You've kept me out of it, up to the present, but now I intend to play Cupid."

"You? What can you do?"

"Probably what you've failed to do, give the young lady an explanation she will not only listen to, but believe."

"Daisy, if you do that—"

"I'll dance at your wedding. Yes, I know. Just now I think I'll dress for dinner and ponder over my plan of campaign.

After she had left him, Mellish sat on the balcony and stared down at the water of the Grand Canal until the shadows lengthened and faded in the gloaming. Gondolas with lanterns in their prows moved lazily along; now and then motor boats chugged noisily by, leaving behind a trail of white foam. Lights began to twinkle at landings. From the distance came the wail of a violin, the twang of a guitar and snatches of song.

He rose and tossed away a cigarette he was smoking. He smiled. Daisy would do what she had promised.

CHAPTER XII

THAT Amelia Craven could believe Vivie had robbed her was so ridiculous to Vivie that at first she was uncertain whether to laugh or defend herself.

The humor of it struck her more forcibly than any sense of danger where she was concerned. She had accused another, and that accusation had been turned upon herself.

Too late she realized she had used small diplomacy in attacking some one to whom Mrs. Craven was attached; but their relations had been so amicable it had not occurred to her that the widow was not as fond of her as she was of the other woman.

It was useless just now to argue, to attempt any real explanation. Every minute was precious. If the pair of rogues had the jewels in their posses-

sion—and Vivie was certain they had —they would lose no time in leaving the city. And it would not be easy to trace them.

The police must be summoned at once. The girl had no fear but that she could prove her own innocence, but she could not risk doing it now, when every second gave Adams and his sister a greater chance to escape.

Vivie's ejaculation caused Mrs. Craven to drop her hand from the doorknob, and stand hesitating.

Vivie read the uncertainty in her eyes.

"Go on," she said, "call the detective."

"Vivie, I just can't bear to do it. The scandal will be awful! Every one in the hotel will hear about it. I've liked you a lot. If you'll give me the diamonds I'll forget all about it. Honestly I will. I won't have you arrested, and I'll pay your fare home."

"I haven't got them!" Vivie cried in exasperation.

"We'll say you were playing a joke on me because I was careless—or that you hid them to protect them—"

"Won't you please understand?" Vivie felt like shaking her. How could any one be so stupid—so utterly childish? "I haven't seen those stones today. If they were in the bag when you handed it to me—"

"They were."

"They've been stolen! I'll admit I was careless. If I hadn't dropped the bag it couldn't have happened, but I never took them. I tell you, I dropped the bag beside Mrs. Drake, and for at least five minutes I wasn't near her. That gave her plenty of time to open it."

"You leave me no alternative!" Amelia gasped. "I'll have to call the police!"

She flung open the door and darted down the corridor. Vivie gave a short, relieved laugh. Above everything, it was what she wanted her to do.

SUDDENLY it occurred to her that her employer would go to Adams before she did anything else, and if Adams was implicated, the last person he would wish to see would be a policeman.

She reached for the telephone. She would call a detective herself. When she took down the receiver, a voice answered her in Italian.

"Can't you speak English?" she asked frantically.

"No, no, *signorina.*"

"Get me some one who can speak English. English," Vivie repeated. If ever she planned to visit Italy again, she'd first learn its language.

She heard the click of the receiver at the other end of the wire. There was no telephone directory in the room, and it was doubtful if the operator had understood her, or could do as she requested.

She paced the floor, thinking rapidly. She had no particular fear for her own safety, but she realized that a pair of rogues as clever as Adams and his sister were not going to be easily trapped. Probably the reason for their waiting game, their weeks of patient endurance of the flighty widow's society, was for just such an opportunity as her carelessness had afforded them that day.

A grim joke Fate had played on her. At the very moment Glen Mellish was warning her about Mrs. Drake, that lady had found an opportunity to accomplish her purpose.

Mrs. Drake had been too clever to enter the widow's rooms and rob her. Adams had let chance after chance slip

by when he could have taken the stones. All those nights on the lagoon and the Grand Canal alone with Amelia. The many times he had been her escort when she was literally ablaze with the baubles.

No, if they were not discovered in Mrs. Drake's possession, neither Vivie nor the police could ever prove that she had taken them.

Why, they might not even resort to flight. It was merely Vivie's word against that of an unscrupulous woman, who could be a dangerous adversary.

What did Glen know about them? Could he prove what he had said?

She must get in touch with him at once. Never mind the police now. She must find out what he knew, and protect herself. Regardless of their manner of parting, he would surely come to her assistance.

SHE caught up the telephone again. The letter she had received from Mellish had been written on Regina Hotel stationery. She did not know the number, but she must make that operator understand.

"*Si, signorina?*" the same polite voice.

"Regina Hotel. Regina," she said slowly. Then added: "Call me."

"Scusa?"

"*Parlez vous Francais?*" Vivie cried in desperation.

"*Oui, signorina.*"

She gave her message in French, begging him to hurry and put the call through. Regina Hotel. Lord Dunsford.

As she hung up the receiver, Mrs. Craven burst into the room, followed by Doris Drake and Adams. Mrs. Drake's eyes were glittering, the pupils pin points. Her face was pale, but there was a smile of insolent derision on her thin lips.

Adams was completely at ease, with no lack of his characteristic poise. With his usual affected grace he allowed the women to precede him, then carefully closed the door and, leaning against it, thrust his hands into his pockets.

Mrs. Craven alone seemed excited. At any other time her disheveled hair, her round, pale face with spots of livid rouge on the cheeks, would have given Vivie a desire to laugh, but now she looked grimly at the trio.

Mrs. Drake spoke first.

Her voice, a low, husky contralto, did not raise, nor did her hand shake as she struck a match and lighted the cigarette she extracted from a jeweled case hanging on a chain at her wrist.

"Amelia tells me she has been robbed," she drawled, "and that you accuse me."

"Yes." Vivie stood her ground.

"It's rather dangerous to make an accusation when you have no proof to back it up."

"But suppose I have proof?" the girl answered defiantly.

Why didn't the telephone ring? Suppose Glen had left Venice!

"How interesting. May I know what it is?"

Vivie shivered at the menace she read in the glittering, snaky gaze of the woman who smiled so calmly. She would need all her wits to combat her. What *were* her proofs? A statement made by a man who had deceived her and who might fail her now!

She looked at Mrs. Craven, then at the nonchalant Adams still in the doorway.

"Mrs. Craven put her jewels in the bag I held while we sat on the beach. It wasn't opened by me, nor by Mrs.

"Glen, Vivie never opened those letters!"

Craven, until we reached the hotel, but it lay on the sand beside you for several minutes while I talked with—Mr. —er—Lord Dunsford." She could not control the quiver in her chin despite her efforts.

"Really? I don't recall your leaving it. As a matter of fact, I distinctly remember that you had it on your arm when you walked away from me."

"Why—" Vivie stammered, "you spoke of my carelessness when I came back. You spoke of Mrs. Craven carrying a fortune around with her—"

"You've got a vivid imagination. If I said anything of the sort I would remember, but I don't. And is this your proof that I am a thief?"

"Oh, Vivie!" Mrs. Craven sobbed. "Why don't you tell the truth? It doesn't do any good to accuse some one else when we know you took them. I don't want to have you arrested. I just want my jewels!"

"Don't waste words on her, dear," Adams said, stepping into the group. "The whole thing is so obvious it's silly to argue about it. The girl took the jewels herself, and, for want of some one better, is trying to pin the theft on Doris. I think we'd better summon the police."

"I wish you would," Vivie cried. "And have them search me! Search everything in this room."

"You are altogether too anxious," Mrs. Drake interrupted. "Of course we'd find nothing on you. You've taken good care that we wouldn't. You and your confederate."

"Confederate!"

"Yes. The man you denied knowing until I proved that you did. The man who so opportunely appeared today and demanded an interview alone with you. How easily, with your back turned to me, you could have taken the jewels from the bag and handed them over to him while he disappeared before any one was the wiser."

Vivie laughed scornfully. "You can scarcely accuse Lord Dunsford of being a thief!"

Mrs. Drake crushed out her cigarette. Vivie felt as though she were crushing her.

"Lord Dunsford!" she sneered. "How many bogus lords are there knocking about Europe? Didn't he tell Amelia his name was Mellish when she first met him? If he is a baronet and a rich man, why is he traveling second class? And why was he posing as married to that girl in Florence when she was no more his wife than I am?"

"WHA-AT!" Vivie dropped into the nearest chair.

"Their rooms weren't even adjoining. I may be a fool—you took me in with your nice manners and quiet ways, but not that woman. She's a cockney if ever there was one, and your precious lord is an American. They're out for game, and they bagged Amelia with your assistance!"

"That's a lie!" Vivie's voice rose.

"I shall go for the police," Adams continued, "and instruct them to detain this Dunsford on suspicion, have both him and the girl searched and—"

"You'll not leave this room!" A fearless determination made Vivie leap to the door and brace herself against the panels. "Mrs. Craven, please use your reason! I never robbed you! If I had wanted to I could have done it hundreds of times before to-day. Listen to me! You've been with me day and night for four months! I came to you with the best credentials in the world—church, bank, employers. What do you know of this man and woman? Nothing, nothing but what they've told you. You are being blinded by your infatuation for a man ten years younger than yourself, a man who has never had anything but evil intentions! To-day, when Lord Dunsford called me away from Mrs. Drake, he did it to warn me against them—to ask me to protect you, because they are crooks! That's what he called them, *crooks!*"

An oath escaped Adams's lips. He caught her by the arm and flung her across the room.

"Enough of this melodrama!" he cried. "I'm going for the police. Don't let her out of your sight."

He flung open the door and was gone on the instant.

"You'll never see him again!" Vivie exclaimed in desperation. "Don't you understand why he's gone? Telephone for a detective—or I'll—"

She started toward the door, but Mrs. Drake, reading her intention, stepped before it.

SEEING that Mrs. Drake had no intention of permitting her to leave the room, Vivie sat down on the bed. She suddenly felt very limp and weak. Tearful.

Momentarily she forgot the call she had made, and when the telephone rang, she reached for it automatically. The next instant her heart leaped in her throat, for Glen's voice came clearly over the wire.

"Some one wishes to speak to Lord Dunsford?"

"It's Vivie!" she cried. "Mrs. Craven has been robbed. At the Victoria—they've accused me! Can you come at once—"

Before she could finish the sentence, Doris Drake leaped across the room and knocked the receiver out of her hand.

"No, you don't! Amelia! Do you see what she's up to! That's a signal to her accomplice—"

Vivie reached frantically for the re-

ceiver, but Amelia, with surprising agility, grasped it first and hung it upon the hook.

"She still has the jewels! And she's sent for that man to dispose of them," Mrs. Craven gasped. "Hold her, Doris!"

"Take your hands off of me!" Vivie cried as Mrs. Drake caught her wrist in a grasp that had more strength than her fragile appearance indicated. "Do you hear? Take your hands off of me!"

Anger, resentment, humiliation, blinded her to the woman's intentions, and she struggled furiously to break away.

"Search her!" shrilled Mrs. Craven.

"Don't you dare until the police arrive!"

Panting, half in tears, she tried to fend off the groping fingers of the woman's hands. Her trim tailored gown split at the shoulder. A bit of lace on the other's sleeve caught on a button and was torn to shreds.

The older woman was by far the stronger; worry and sleepless nights had left Vivie no physical match for her. She was pushed against the wall in a position that gave Mrs. Drake access to her pockets.

Amelia, roused to action by Vivie's indignation and her friend's certainty that Vivie was the thief, snatched up a purse from the bureau and emptied its contents on the bed.

The girl felt the room swimming. Green eyes gleamed out of a red mist. Involuntarily she sobbed, "Glen! Glen!" knowing well as she called that he could not hear her. He had failed her!

She slumped and lost her balance as Mrs. Drake, with a cry of triumph, loosened her grasp.

"Amelia! Look! Here's one of your rings. She had it in her pocket!"

A wave of horror engulfed Vivie. She saw the diamond gleam in Mrs. Drake's outstretched hand, saw Amelia pounce upon it. Then she crumpled in a limp heap on the floor.

"Call the house detective!" Mrs. Drake commanded. "We won't wait for Bobbie! Ask him to come up here at once."

She bent over Vivie and shook her. Then, dragging the unresisting girl to her feet, Mrs. Drake pushed her into a chair.

Vivie's teeth were chattering. Anger, fear, amazement, and surprise made her incapable of reasoning. For the moment she was too stunned to think coherently, to attempt a protest of her innocence.

She heard Mrs. Craven at the telephone, asking for the *concierge;* heard the words "detective—police," repeated, but she sat motionless, her icy hands hanging limp at her sides.

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. DRAKE'S fingers bit into her shoulders again.

"Where are the rest of the diamonds?"

Vivie's mouth twitched. She swallowed the hard lump in her throat, but did not answer.

The question was repeated.

"You'd better tell us." Amelia swung around from the telephone. Her voice was as acid as her friend's. "I've offered to release you, and not have you punished if you'd give them to me. I'll still do it, Vivie, but you've got to confess—"

Vivie laughed, a harsh, bitter gurgle that ended in a sob. "I haven't got them! If she found that ring in my pocket it was because she put it there!

If I'm a thief, at least give me credit for being a good one! Only a fool would put a ring like that in her pocket, when she knew she'd be searched! Why should I hide all the rest and leave that where it could be found at once?"

The plant was so obvious she marveled at Mrs. Craven's inability to see it. Was the woman determined to believe she had robbed her? So enamored of the pair that she preferred to lose her property rather than admit for a moment the possibility they could deceive her.

Where was Glen? Surely by this time he could have reached the hotel.

There was a knock on the door. Mrs. Drake opened it. The *concierge,* a stout little person with beady black eyes under shaggy gray brows and a red button of a mouth, came bustling into the room. Behind him followed a younger man in the blue uniform and cape of the Italian police.

The *concierge* was greatly perturbed.

"You say detective," he stammered, struggling to find English words to express himself. "There is no detective in the hotel, so I breeng a police. What—what have happened? Is there someting de mat'?"

"I've been robbed!"

"Oh, no, no, *signora!* Oh, no, thees —eet ees impossible!" He flung up his hands in dismay. "Thees hotel ees mos' respectable, and—"

"I've been robbed!" Amelia repeated. "And I know who did it! I want you to arrest my companion."

Vivie half started to her feet, then dropped back again.

THE *concierge* turned to the officer and, in Italian, explained with many gestures what she had said.

The policeman, young, sloe-eyed and handsome, looked at Vivie with undisguised admiration. His steady gaze took in every detail of her appearance —her torn frock, pale face, Titian hair. Then he shook his head and spoke to the clerk.

The latter translated what he had said.

"He say, why you accuse her? He weesh to know why you weesh her arrest."

Both women started to speak at once. The clerk, listening to the rapid battery of words in a language with which he had small familiarity, looked bewildered, then exasperated. Finally he exclaimed:

"*Signori!* Pleasa! Pleasa! I can no' understand. Pleasa to speech one at the time. Signorina Craven have been robbed—*si, si,* I understand thees! She have loosed many jewels. You 'ave found one on thesa lady. Correct?" He beamed at his own intelligence. "But the Lido—the sand —what you meana the Lido—?"

Slowly Doris Drake repeated her accusation, then produced the ring she had found in Vivie's pocket. The policeman took it, studied it a moment, then drawing the *concierge* aside, talked to him again in a whisper.

To Vivie it was all a nightmare from which she was sure to awaken. It couldn't be real.

She saw the officer walk about the room, examine her wardrobe, open bureau drawers and suitcases, peer into her purse, but she did nothing.

The longer the policeman took to search her room, the more time was given Mellish to reach her. If only he would come!

A shrug of the blue-clad shoulders. The officer touched her arm.

Then Vivie spoke.

"Search her!" she cried, pointing at

Doris Drake. "Go in her room and search it. I'm innocent, and if you arrest me the jewels will never be found!"

The officer looked at her, uncomprehending. The more she said, the less he understood. When she tried to pull away from him, his grasp tightened.

Mrs. Craven burst into audible weeping. Mrs. Drake flung the girl's coat around her shoulders, and opened the door.

"Better go quietly," she said, a derisive smile wreathing her lips. "They've got you dead to rights, and you can't get away."

He unlocked a pigskin bag and drew out a revolver which he dropped into his coat pocket. Then he walked down the corridors and knocked on a door.

A girl's voice answered: "Come in."

Lady Dunsford rose quickly from a dressing table and pulled the folds of her embroidered peignoir about her.

Panting and in tears, Vivie did her best to fend off the woman's groping fingers

CHAPTER XIV

MELLISH rattled the receiver several times. When he realized the connection was broken he hung it back on the hook and reached for his coat. There was a look in his hazel eyes that boded no good for those who had caused Vivie's trouble.

"I'm off to the Victoria," Mellish said tensely. "Dress as quickly as you can and get in touch with Baroni. I haven't time."

"You mean they've pulled the trick?"

"It looks like it! Vivie just phoned. The devils have implicated her!"

"Glen!"

"I can't stop to explain. She'd never have phoned me if she weren't in serious trouble. Hurry, will you? I'll not be able to do very much without Baroni, but I'll try to forestall a get-away until you reach the hotel."

"I'm with you."

She kicked off her black satin mules

as she spoke, and by the time he had closed the door behind him had thrown her peignoir aside.

Mellish did not wait for the elevator, but sprinted down the stairs two at a time, and dashed into the street.

The distance between the two hotels was short, but indirect. In his haste to reach Vivie he made several false turns, and found himself up against blank walls or spanning bridges that led to factory entrances.

Furious at the delay when every minute counted, he hailed a gondolier, lazily sleeping in the bottom of his boat, and directed him to use all speed to his destination.

Speed in Venice is practically unknown. Mellish could fret and fume, rage and curse, the boatman's arms moved slowly and steadily, the oar dipped with methodical rhythm into the muddy water and out again. The gondola swung under a low bridge and turned into a narrow, dark canal skirted by a stone pavement.

Overhead, arches joined the stone walls on either side, and practically shut out the waning daylight. At that hour the streets and water thoroughfares were deserted. Factories were closed. Venetians were dining, or gathering at San Marco Square.

MELLISH glanced up just in time to see a man dart out from a shadowy alleyway and look furtively behind him. On one arm he carried a raincoat which half concealed a leather brief case. In the other hand was a small suitcase. He set the suitcase on the ground and pushed back his hat with a gesture that indicated fatigue, while he scanned the canal.

In that moment Mellish recognized him. Bob Adams!

The valise and brief case meant flight. Adams could easily have hailed a taxi at his hotel if he had not wished to slip away unnoticed.

In view of Vivie's telephone communication, Mellish felt sure Adams had the jewels in his possession and was making an escape!

Adams could not have recognized *him*, for he started to hail the gondola, then evidently realizing it had an occupant, dropped his hand and looked down the canal for another.

Mellish leaned forward and touched the gondolier.

"Go to the next *via*," he directed in Italian, "then turn around and come back here. Pick up that man. He'll tell you to go to the railroad station. Go as far as the Grand Canal—then wait for instructions from me."

The boatman nodded. Any foreigner who could speak his language as this passenger could speak it, was to be obeyed unquestioningly. He sensed an intrigue, adventure. The Italian loves both.

Mellish slid down into the boat behind a heavy wicker chair and piled the leather cushions from the bench around him. In the dusk he was reasonably certain he could not be seen by any one on the embankment, nor by a passenger intent only upon getting to his destination without discovery.

The boat ground against the moss-covered foundations of an ancient palace, long since turned into a tenement dwelling, quivered from the impact, then laboriously swung around. From his hiding place Mellish heard Adams call: "Hello! Hello! Gondolier!"

Then the man stepped into the boat, and seated himself in the chair that hid the other.

Mellish waited until the boat had left the narrow stream with its con-

venient landings, and was well in the center of the Grand Canal before he pushed aside the cushions and slipped into the bench behind him.

Adams swung around with a smothered oath. Recognition flashed across his dark face.

"Dunsford!" he ejaculated. "Where did you come from?"

Mellish indicated his hiding place with a nod of his head. In his hand was a glint of steel.

"Turn your chair around, Adams," he said quietly.

"What the devil—"

"The game is up. I don't think you'll reach the railroad this trip."

"What do you mean?"

"In plain English, I've got you. Sit down. Take it easy, unless you want to drown. I have you covered, and you haven't a chance."

THE swarthy face became green. "Who — who — are you?" he stammered. "What do you want?"

Mellish chuckled.

"You're a clever pair, aren't you? I've trailed you over half of Europe, and always you've slipped through my fingers. But I knew some day you'd make a false move and I'd nail you. Venice isn't a good place to pull a stunt like this, Adams — or Drake, if you prefer it. It isn't easy to get away."

"What are you talking about?"

"You know what I'm talking about. The authorities had a pretty good idea that you and your lady pulled that Chisholm robbery at Southampton that winter, but they couldn't prove it. I followed you to London, Adams, where you changed your name and became her brother. In Paris, when the La Croix emeralds were stolen, it looked like your work, but the Prefecture thought otherwise. Vienna was poor picking, wasn't it? Naples not so much better. But Florence—oh, Florence—the wealthy widow with her half million dollars' worth of baubles proved interesting—"

"I suppose," drawled Adams, lighting a cigarette with fingers that trembled perceptibly, "you are trying to tell me you are a detective?"

"Criminal investigator, old man. Note the difference. Retained by the Chisholm estate to return their property. And incidentally I'd like Mrs. Craven's diamonds."

"Oh, would you?" sneered the other. "You're jolly well certain of yourself, it seems to me. I can prove who and what I am, but the fact that you've the advantage of me in firearms doesn't prove you're anything but some fool American masquerading as a baronet."

"Granted the masquerade," Mellish bowed. "It fooled you. I'd hoped you'd find Lady Dunsford's jewels attractive. You didn't. But I fancy I'll have no trouble convincing the right persons as to my identity. Hand over the bag, Adams."

"Like the pig's eye I will."

He rose suddenly, the boat lurched. The next moment Mellish's revolver was pressed against his chest.

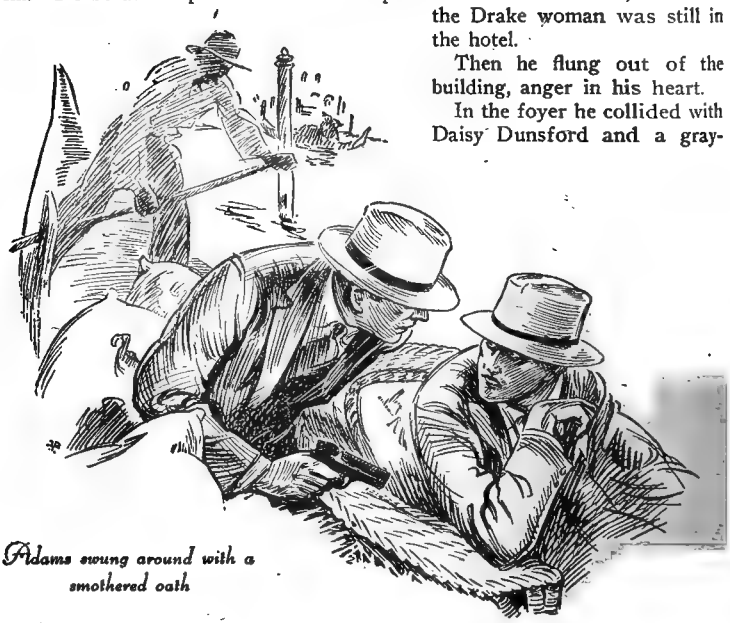
"I think you will," Mellish said with deadly intent. "I've traveled five thousand miles for this hour."

Adams sank back into the chair. The portfolio fell to the bottom of the boat. Mellish kicked it behind him. Then he called to the oarsman to cut across to the patrol.

At his "hello!" one of the officers turned. Mellish indicated his prisoner with a gesture.

"Put him under arrest," he said. "Take this"—he tossed both port-

folio and valise into the other boat—"with you. Unless I'm mistaken there's a fortune in jewels in one of them. I'll be at the police station in a half hour to put in my charge against him."



Adams swung around with a smothered oath

CHAPTER XV.

THE hotel lobby was agog with excitement. With much gesticulation the *concierge* was explaining to guests and employees how the "So beautiful young American" had robbed her mistress, and the mistress, in hysterical tears, had gone away with the police and the *signorina* to the station to get back her jewels. The other *signora* was ill. Very ill. She could not go with them, she was so seeck.

Mellish, arriving at the Victoria, heard enough to understand that Vivie, his lovely Vivie, had been dragged to a police court under arrest, and that the Drake woman was still in the hotel.

Then he flung out of the building, anger in his heart.

In the foyer he collided with Daisy Dunsford and a gray-bearded, dignified gentleman in uniform.

"I've caught Adams," he informed them, "and the woman is still upstairs. But the dumb-bells have arrested Vivie! Explain to them, Daisy."

With small consideration for Baroni's position as chief of police, he dashed past them and around the corner.

If the *concierge* was excited before, subsequent events almost unbalanced his reason; for, ten minutes later, a shrieking, struggling woman, strangely unlike the suave Mrs. Drake, was dragged down the stairs and hustled

into a gondola by the official he thoroughly respected.

She had been caught in the midst of packing for a surreptitious leave-taking, and a false lining of one of her trunks concealed a fortune in jewels stolen from a Long Island estate.

A WEEPING, hysterical woman met Mellish in the doorway of the police station. Amelia was terribly sorry for herself. She had spent a miserable half hour in the court room with an interpreter and a stern-faced judge.

Vivie's white face and stony eyes had confused her. Mrs. Drake's sudden illness and Bobbie's absence and lack of moral support had weakened her. All she had managed to do was reiterate that she had loved Vivie Bowen, and Vivie had robbed her.

"I don't want her sent to prison," she had sobbed. "If she'll just give me my diamonds, I won't do a thing about it! I've told her that again and again."

When the magistrate had informed her that if the girl was a thief she would have to be punished, Amelia had gone into hysterics.

She had seen Vivie, just a little paler, but still stony eyed, led away by a matron, then had stumbled out into the sunshine.

She welcomed Mellish with open arms.

"Lord Dunsford! You've heard! Isn't it horrible? To think of Vivie—you know how kind I've always been to Vivie—why, I've loved her like a daughter — I mean, like a sister — to think of her robbing me—"

"Where is she?" he interrupted sternly.

"They took her away! I think she's in a cell. It's too terrible for—"

"Good God!" He pushed aside her clinging hands so violently she almost fell. "But for Vivie's phone call to me, that precious Adams and his wife would have escaped—and you—"

"Wife!" she shrilled.

"The Drake woman is his wife. They're both under arrest now."

Mrs. Craven gave a low moan and closed her eyes. When she opened them again Mellish was gone.

'VIVIE!"

The dejected little figure on the stone bench, with her golden head resting against the gray walls, her violet shadowed eyes staring off into space, and frail hands clasped listlessly in her lap, tore at the man's heart and brought a lump to his throat.

"Vivie," he repeated softly.

She stared at him, at the open door behind him, and the turnkey with the jangling keys, then she gave a glad cry and fled to his arms.

"Glen!" she sobbed. "You did come after all!"

Always afterward she was glad she had not waited for explanations to yield to his caress. In that moment all misunderstandings were wiped away. He was her lover. No other woman in the world could claim him. Love and longing such as hers brooked no obstacles.

Even when she saw Lady Dunsford in the corridor as they passed outside, it did not occur to her to draw away from his embrace. It did not seem strange that the blond girl should come forward with outstretched hand and a pleased smile on her face.

"I see everything is topping between you two," she said heartily. "Now that the masquerade is over, Glen, why not introduce us?"

"Masquerade?" Vivie questioned.

"My word! Then you didn't know. I told Glen I wagered you didn't. I'm his English cousin, Miss Bowen, and we—"

"I'll supply the details," Mellish interrupted dryly. "Vivie, there's moonlight on the lagoon; shall we take a gondola and find it?"

"Oh, yes," she breathed.

"YOU see, darling," he said later as they lay in the gondola under the star-dotted sky, "Pat Chisholm was a great friend of mine. When his wife's jewels were stolen, they handed the case over to me. Some day I'll tell you the whole story, but just now it would take too long.

"Anyway, I trailed the Drakes to London, where I met my cousin Daisy. She's a clever girl, and I persuaded her to join forces with me. We were reasonably certain that the Drakes were the perpetrators of a number of jewel thefts, but we couldn't prove it. They traveled in a pretty swagger set, and had too many friends for me to chance an arrest without absolute proof. They never stayed long in one place. Too clever to do that. But they made their big mistake when he suddenly changed his name and called her his sister. That happened in Naples.

"When they turned up in Florence, Daisy and I conceived the idea of becoming Lord and Lady Dunsford, and staying at the same hotel with them. But already the widow had entered the picture—"

"Poor Amelia!" murmured Vivie.

"Poor nothing! After her treatment of you she deserves all she got."

"You're sure—very sure—" toying with the fingers of one of his hands, "you were not the least bit in love with your cousin?"

"Daisy? Never! I was never in love with any one until I met you."

"I'm glad." Vivie nestled closer against his shoulder. "For I never was in love with any one until I met you—not the littlest bit."

His lips rested for a moment against her cheek, then: "Vivie, you know I'll have to take my prisoners back to the States. But there's one thing I'd like very much to do before my return."

"Yes?"

"Stop off for a day in Florence and spend a few hours in Boboli Gardens. Would you like it?"

"I'd love it."

"And then—"

"And then?"

"We'll be married in the de Medici Chapel—unless you prefer to be married at home."

"Oh, Glen," she half sobbed, "if only you'd said that before, I would never have been arrested!"

"I don't understand, dear."

"Of course you don't," she laughed through her tears. "Maybe later I'll explain, but just now I want to give you a little advice. Never tell a girl you love her—and expect her to believe you—unless you ask her to marry you."

"Why, bless my soul, I thought—"

She silenced him with a kiss.

IT was late when they entered the hotel and separated.

Upon entering her room, Vivie walked over to the casement window and looked out, her heart too full for words. She was going to become Glen's wife, to be married in the city she loved above all others! Lon Stallart, her employer's childhood sweetheart, would come and take Mrs. Craven home.

As she stood by the window she

reached out her arms to the moon, a silver disk in a velvet sky, and breathed a hymn of thankfulness. She had been given a capacity for deep suffering, but without that capacity she would never have known the exquisite heights that love could reach.

There might be more suffering before her in the years to come, but there would be great abiding joy to offset it. Two days more, and with Glen by her side, she would wander under the cypress trees in the Italian garden where she had found love, this time with the knowledge that it was hers to keep and cherish as long as she lived.

A voiceless prayer that she should prove worthy filled her heart.

THE END

A Sunset Song

THE gold of the sun falls into the sea
Where the gold of a thousand sunsets lies,
And it brings a golden memory
Out of the sleeping past to me:
Your voice—your eyes—
Your face, as we watched the jealous sea
Snatch at the sun and hold it tight.
Tenderly then you turned to me,
Golden girl in the golden light,
And gave me the gold of your love, and now
As I watch the setting sun, somehow
I know you'll come back, and we'll see once more
The night come down as we did before.
Together here, on the darkening land,
We'll watch new sunsets, hand in hand.

—Mary Carolyn Davies.

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts."

If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career."

You may take advantage of one or both services, but a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found at the end of this department.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

Girls' clubs or organizations may secure Mr. Fraser's services for an evening's lecture by addressing him care this magazine.

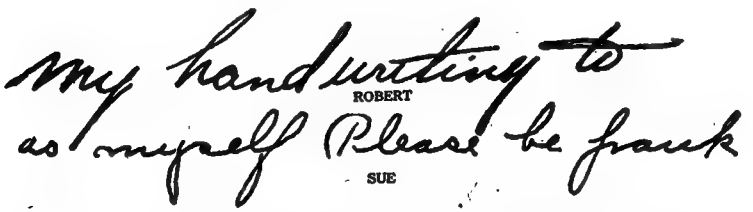
IN the early summer I had a desire to take my annual vacation when the city multitudes had folded their camps and gone home for the season. My vantage ground was to be the White Mountains, and my departure in the late Fall.

But thanks to my thousand and one correspondents, these schemes of mine have not materialized. The White Mountains of my dreams have been transferred overnight to 280 Broadway, and Mother Nature will have to give place to human nature for the time being.

Believe me, girls, this "white mountain" of letters you are sending me daily gives me more kick than the fall-

ing of a million leaves in New Hampshire, and, vacation or no vacation, each one of you is to hear from me personally, and as quickly as possible.

SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS



(Miss S. V. R., Fargo, North Dakota.) I was very much interested in what you told me in your letter, and as far as your troubles are concerned, I sympathize with you a lot. At the same time I would have you remember that "the course of true love never did run smooth," and you and Robert are no exception to the general rule. Bickerings among lovers are as common as fire crackers on the Fourth of July, and though he did say many nasty things to you at the picnic there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the fellow. I'll admit he has a superabundance of conceit, and a good deal of pomposity about him; he also likes to show off a little bit to those whom he considers his inferiors. I grant you he has a temper which is far from being angelic, but, on the other hand, I see in this boy a considerable amount of honesty and integrity. He possesses a mind which is alert and watchful of every opportunity, a will-power which never knows when it is beaten, and an affection for you which is capable of wearing well. What more in the way of sterling qualities could you expect in a youth of twenty-one? I don't blame him altogether though he did "act mean" after looking closely at some of your looped letters. You are no angel yourself. There seems to be a conflict going on constantly between your heart and your head. I would call you a temperamental lover. And doubtless Robert has discovered this in you more times than once and is getting a little tired of it. For the happiness of both of you, I would advise you to kiss and make up again.

Readers will be interested in this letter from Dorothy Stone, daughter of Fred Stone and a famous Broadway star:

The Warwick,
65 West 54th Street,
New York.

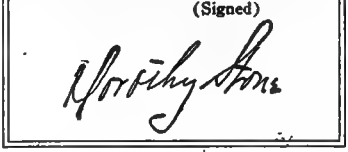
DEAR JOHN FRASER:

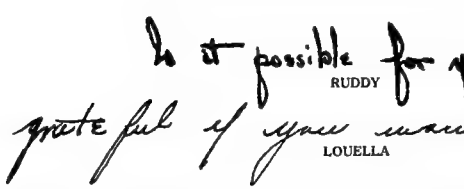
I have to thank you for that splendid, accurate analysis. It was not only beautifully written, but the most accurate thing I have ever had.

By the way, your new magazine is most interesting and delightful reading for the girls of America.

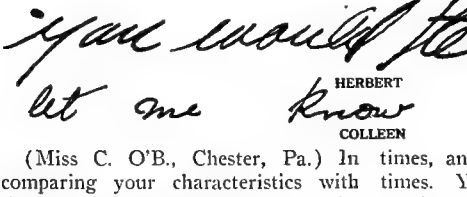
Wishing you every success,

(Signed)



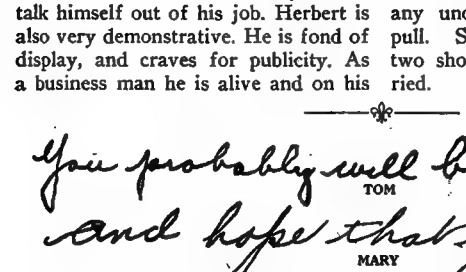


(Miss L. O., Greenville, S. C.) Both you and your sweetheart have tastes which gravitate to the artistic things of life. You are both of the concentrative order. In fact you vie with each other when it comes to being analytically inclined. Of course Ruddy has it all over you in the matter of creative power. Do you know that you have fallen in love with a young man who has all the earmarks of a genius in the artistic field? I see no reason why he should not be an outstanding personality in his line of work in a very few years. As a lover, I would not say he would ever be a Valentino or a Gilbert. It is true that he has passion and romance in his make-up, but these feelings flow in another channel altogether from that of any amative infatuation. He belongs to the type of humans who are more or less temperamental: up in the clouds one day, down in the depths the next. To come to your own traits, I find that you are very romantic. You live for love and you love to be loved. You are restless and in many ways changeable in your moods and desires. I would call you an exacting lover. I'm sure poor Ruddy must be sometimes at his wit's end to try and please you. You would drive me crazy with your caprice. The question of compatibility in your case is fifty-fifty. If you two young folk are willing to lay your cards on the table and play the game of give and take, day in and day out, I would say go ahead and get married.

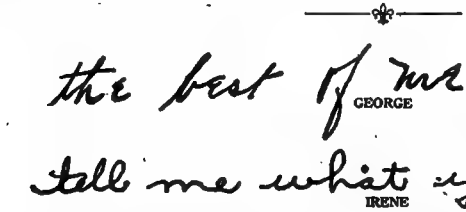


(Miss C. O'B., Chester, Pa.) In comparing your characteristics with that of your sweetheart's you are by far the weaker of the two, mentally as well as physically. Of course this does not mean to say that you are a weakling above the ears. On the contrary, you impress me as a girl who has been endowed with great inherent ability. You are clever and nimble witted; a typically feminine girl who too often jumps at conclusions. Self-willed at times, and rather egotistical at other times. Your superior upbringing has taught you to stand on your own two feet. In other words, you do your own thinking, and don't care much about listening to the say-so of your friends. No one could call you a talkative girl; you prefer to listen. And this is where Herbert gets his innings. How he loves to declaim and strut his masculine stuff! He will always have a patient listener in you, since you rather admire

a man with a good delivery. In this connection don't give him too much rope, otherwise he may "hang himself" in the fact that some day he will talk himself out of his job. Herbert is also very demonstrative. He is fond of display, and craves for publicity. As a business man he is alive and on his toes all the time. I would call him a steam engine in pants, and a fellow who I am sure will make his way in the world without having to resort to any underhand methods or political pull. So I see no reason why you two should not be happy when married.



(Miss M. P. F., Omaha, Neb.) In several respects you and Tom are fairly well mated. You are both optimists, and great believers in the old adage that "every cloud has a silver lining." Your husband will never hesitate to tell you the latest story he heard in the office that day, and you will always be an interested listener, since you have a keen sense of humor yourself. I find it isn't in Tom to be overbearing and bossy. He will give you pretty much your own way, for he happens to be a lover of peace at any price. You, on the other hand, have a gift of the gab. You'll be the orator in the family. A great believer in just telling people what you think of them, and not behind their backs either. I wouldn't be surprised if you rather patted yourself on the back for this tendency to outspokenness. I'm sure Tom would never enthuse very much, even in his most romantic moments. He's not built that way, while you give way to your feelings. In other words, you are extremely affectionate, and somewhat kittenish when you think you are not getting the maximum amount of Tom's attention. When you get married, as I would advise you to, see that your husband stands up for his own rights a little more. A wife can be a great power for good in the way of instilling confidence and backbone into her partner, and this is exactly what Tom requires more than anything else. I wish you both the best of luck.



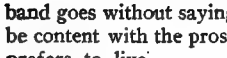
(Miss I. O. N., Brooklyn, N. Y.) The young man you are in love with has many commendable qualities as far as business is concerned. He would be

a splendid moneymaker and, no doubt, a good provider when you were married. But whether he is the right man for you—I hesitate to express an opinion and my reason is twofold. First of all, he belongs to the aggressive type of men who must be constantly fed with different kinds of excitement and novelty. If it's a show to-night, it will have to be a bridge party to-morrow. An ever-changing program of events and appointments must be continually before him, otherwise his eyes lack luster, and he soon grows stale. My second reason for my doubts is I find that George is a rather know-it-all sort of a fellow, judging by the way he makes his capital letters. He simply glories in ceremony and tall talk. If you ever happened to have a "house party" you would be bored to death long before the evening was over by the way he would palaver with your guests. No, you and George could never be called a well matched pair. You have nothing very much in common with each other. For example, you are of the thoughtful, self-restrained type. Your cultured, quiet manner is a distinct contrast to his rollicking, boisterous and rather romantic nature. Furthermore, Irene, don't you think the disparity in your ages is too great? I believe in the man being a few years older than the girl. He is a man of the world, while you are still little more than the high school girl.

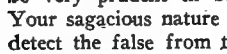
(Miss A. Y., Tulsa, Okla.) Both your natures are rather steady-going, and your minds equipoised. In other words, you both look out on life in a sane and sensible fashion. Neither of you will rise to the dizzy heights of fame, nor will you ever descend to mediocrity. You will always be above the average in intellect and common sense. Your "boy friend" as you term him, is more physical than mental. That is to say, he would rather do a job on the farm than conduct a department on "Handwriting and Happiness" in ALL-STORY MAGAZINE. He appears to have lots of self-assurance about him. He has an independent nature, and the habit of going his own tin-pot way irrespective of what the other fellow thinks or says. Whether you prefer that domineering type of disposition lies entirely with yourself. This case of yours is a study in contrasts. I observe that you are quiet, modest and extremely unassuming. You are soft-hearted and rather sensitive. You are self-sacrificing, and, on the whole, good-natured. Romance is never far from the surface of your nature. Unfortunately, however, this quality in you will never have full play as long as Al is around. He is not sentimentally inclined, neither does he believe in hearing affectionate utterances from the lips of other people. That he will make a good hus-

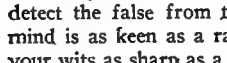
band goes without saying, if you would be content with the prosaic life that Al prefers to live.

YOUR CAREER

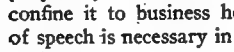


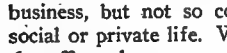
(Miss K. McL., Hamilton, Ont.) Your buoyancy and ambition to get on in the world is characteristic of your whole make-up. You are an optimist and have ripened in the sun. Since you are determined to win, come what may, I would suggest that the sooner you get into the real estate business the better. A nature like yours would be a veritable gold mine to some realtor who has a building development on his hands. You would never be easily discouraged however hard the task. You apparently know that success is all backbone. There is no wishbone about it. Another thing I like about you is your logical way of looking at problems. You would always be very prudent in business affairs. Your sagacious nature could instantly detect the false from the true. Your mind is as keen as a razor blade, and your wits as sharp as a jester's. Your propensity to talk is all right, if you confine it to business hours. Fluency of speech is necessary in the real estate business, but not so commendable in social or private life. When you leave the office, change your rôle and be a good listener rather than a brilliant talker. Remember: that empty kettles always make the most noise!





(Miss D. S. H., Scranton, Pa.) Your quiet, steady, and matter-of-fact way of doing things leads me to the conclusion that you are best suited for the nursing profession. Your handwriting shows an infinite amount of patience, and an equal amount of decision. Your thinking would always be constructive, and your advice worth the listening to. Of course, I'm not forgetting the fact that you are only seventeen years of age, and your nature apt to change before you reach your majority. But, despite that possibility, there is a canniness about you which convinces me your place in life is by the bedside of the sick and infirm. There are one or two things in your nature which are not exactly commendable. For example, you are a little too self-important in your bearing. You would be inclined to pout and show off, particularly when the boys are around. Don't tell your confidences so much to promiscuous acquaintances. If you must have confidantes, choose one or two girl friends several years older than yourself. Then, lastly, study a little more. Your education is by no means finished. With a few more adjustments, which you will find out for yourself as you get older, you have a wonderful opportunity for making good in the capacity of private or institutional nurse.





(Miss J. M. T., Jacksonville, Fla.) It is very clear to me, apart from what you say in your letter, that the young mind has a great fascination for you. Judging by a few outstanding characteristics in your penmanship, I would advise you to concentrate your attention on the training or instructing of

children. This does not necessarily mean school teaching, but rather instruction in a private way. The position of governess in some family would be a very suitable berth for one with your talents and disposition. I observe that you are a spiritually-minded girl, and lean to the higher and better things of life. Your quiet, unobtrusive manner would be no detriment to you in winning the confidence of the young folk; neither would your imaginative power become impotent in the presence of your pupils. With all your winsomeness of manner, however, there are distinct indications of vindictiveness in your make-up. You like to have "the last word" in an argument, and are apt to cherish resentment when some one does you a wrong. Watch this disappointing tendency in your nature, and before you're a day older resolve to get rid of it. You are a well educated girl, and, as such, you ought to strive for a lucrative position in the direction I've just mentioned.

—❦—

Last frame

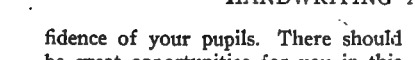
(Miss N. L., Providence, R. I.) You are a girl of culture and of fine business ability. I like your force of character, and your clear-cut ideas about things. I would not hesitate to say that you have an old head on young shoulders, judging by your sane and sensible ways of looking at things. You hint in your letter that you want to be your own boss. Well, I firmly believe you will be before you are many years older. I consider you specially suited for some educational institution or school. It is just in an organization like this that you'll require these leadership qualities which characterize your whole personality. To come to the sentimental side of your nature, you are extremely affectionate and rather sensitive. You are also impatient and occasionally irritable when you don't get your own way. You don't object to flattery, and prefer the company of men much more than that of your own sex. I would advise you to strengthen your memory a little more, and learn to talk a little less. Your outspokenness may get you into trouble, if you're not careful. Otherwise, you have ample ability to go as high in the teaching profession as you have a mind to.

—❦—

I am taking

(Miss S. J., Chicago, Ill.) You impress me as a girl who has an old head on young shoulders. I shouldn't be surprised if this is the result of "your hard lot while you were young," as you explain in your letter. Whatever it is, I know you have at present a wonderful faculty for constructive thinking and sound judgment. Your insight into the complexities of human nature is also keen. Your conclusions would always be dependable, and your advice valuable at all times. All this leads me to say that your life work lies in the teaching of the young. Of course, I don't think that your impetuosity is anything to be proud of. Self-control is something which you will have to learn when you stand before a class of backward children. Apart from this feminine foible, you ought to make good as an instructor. Your fluency of speech is quite adequate to make you interesting, and your gracious manner sufficient to win the con-

fidence of your pupils. There should be great opportunities for you in this profession.



(Miss D. A. W., El Paso, Texas.) You possess not only a firm hand but also steady nerves. You have leanings toward analytical work, which requires skill as well as exactness. I would advise you to take up dentistry as a profession. It is true this work is not so popular with women as it might be, but there is no reason why you should not give your attention to the practice of filling, adjusting, or the extracting of teeth. Your quiet but firm manner ought to help you in this business. I notice diplomacy is one of your strongest traits, and what is a more necessary characteristic in a dentist's office than that excellent quality called tact. Half the battle is won when the surgeon can convince his patient that the trouble is very slight, and the operation almost painless. If I mistake not, you have this finesse which is essential to the building of a satisfied clientele. On the other hand, you would be all the better for a little more firmness when it comes to demanding your fee. I observe a tendency here and there in your nature to be rather timid when remuneration is mentioned. Don't forget that "money makes the mare to go," and the financial end of a business is just as important as the practical side of it.

Girls' clubs and organizations can secure the services of John Fraser by writing to him care of this magazine. An evening's entertainment and instruction of surpassing interest is provided by Mr. Fraser's analyses.

If you belong to a club suggest to the other members that they set aside a meeting to be addressed by Mr. Fraser. Vocational problems of the members can be solved by having this expert in graphology analyze handwriting specimens. Simply address him care ALL-STORY, 280 Broadway, New York City.

JOHN FRASER,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway,
New York City.

This coupon is not good after November 16. A stamped addressed envelope must be enclosed when forwarding.

I enclose handwriting specimen for
—Service for Sweethearts.
—Your Career.
(Check which you prefer.)

Name.....

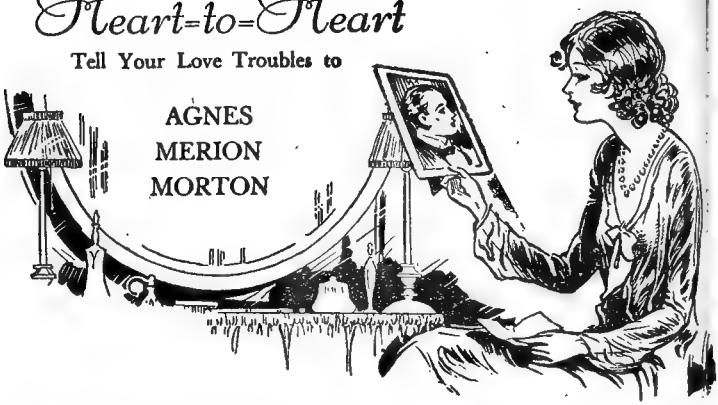
Street and No. .....

City..... State..... .

Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

AGNES
MERION
MORTON



MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters, she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to enclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

THE group of letters I am choosing to answer in this issue are all related. They are from young persons who are, for one reason or another, kept too strictly, or who think they are kept too strictly—which is almost as hard.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I am a constant reader of ALL-STORY *and have admired your department and consequently you, from afar, for some time.*

I am an orphan and have been since I was three years old. My aunt and uncle adopted me and raised me. A short time ago—but how long it seems —my foster mother died. My foster father and I moved from our old surroundings near some relatives, and I keep house, as I am quite old enough. Since mother's death my foster father is very different. He never speaks unless it's necessary, and never kisses me good-by when he goes away unless I ask him to. Oh, I might as well be without any one for all the attention I get from him. Then, while he is away —he works on the boats—he writes just to tell me when he'll be home. In his last letter he says: "Now to settle down to the terrible ordeal of writing to you." Isn't that a wonderful beginning?

Please, oh, please, tell me what to do. I am a good girl, still he won't let me go out with any one. What have I done, Mrs. Morton, to deserve such punishment? At times I contemplate running away, but where would that lead me,

what good would that do? I am good-looking, my friends, the few I have, tell me. If that's the reason he's acting that way I wish I was plain or homely. Sometimes I think I would welcome death, but I won't die—I'm too young.

I want love, Mrs. Morton. All my life I have been without it. And what is life without love? Tell me just what you would tell your own daughter. You have helped so many. Please, please help me. *Bluebird.*

I understand you do not print the address. Thank you, Mrs. Morton.

Bluebird, have you ever thought what you would like to do in the world if you had to earn your own living outside the home? That is where your remedy lies: in some exacting, interesting work that will take up your mind and keep you from poisoning your thoughts with morbid self-pity. In a city the size of yours there are numberless places where you could learn to do almost anything—take a business course, train as a nurse, study any of the arts or sciences, or take up expert dressmaking or designing—oh, the opportunities are endless. Think it over; there must be something for which you have a natural talent or inclination. Decide what you'd like to be or do, and then talk it over with your uncle the next time he comes home. He must know that the lonely life you lead is not good for any girl; that you don't have enough to keep you busy. Find out if he is willing to help you to some sort of education. I'm sure he will help if you approach him in the right way.

Yes, love is essential to all of us, but it is not the only thing in the world. I don't like to see a young girl get into your present frame of mind; for if she looks so anxiously for love she will fix her affections on the first man who comes along, regardless of whether he is worthy of it. You would have nothing to compare him with. How could you judge if the love was true or only an illusion? The Real Thing, Bluebird, usually comes to those who are thinking of something else. So my advice is, get that something else to think of—and get it quickly.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I have just finished reading some of your letters and think you can help me decide what to do.

My mother is a widow and has worked hard for me. About a year ago she went to keep house for a man whose wife left him. I know for a fact that the wife was in the wrong. He is a wonderful man, so good around the house. Well, he told my mother he liked her and she seemed happy over it, so I said nothing. I go to Girls' Friendly Monday nights and he walks up to meet me as it's late when I go home sometimes. He told me he loved me. I am eighteen and he is thirty-eight. I really love him too, but he doesn't want my mother to know anything about it, but I think she ought to know. When we go out, which is maybe once a month, we have to say we are going to see some friend. He is going one place, I am going another. When in the house he ignores me entirely. He's all for my mother then. That makes me feel terrible. When he and I are alone any one would think he worshiped me. He plans to get his divorce in December, then he thinks I'll marry him, but if I would I don't think I could stand sharing him even with my mother. I may be foolish, but I can't decide what I should do. I told him once he should not have told me he loved me if he didn't want my mother to know. This is the first time I have loved any man,

and I think it's a funny beginning. Won't you please write soon and advise me? *Wilma.*

Wilma, dear, I don't like to judge this man harshly, but he has failed at marriage once and he seems very likely to fail at it again. He certainly is not true either to your mother or you, or he would not be teaching you to deceive her.

To begin with, he is more than twice your age, and you would probably not be happy together. People of different generations rarely understand each other well enough to marry—the younger one, especially, almost always wakes up to face a great boredom. Tell him he must stop making love to you on the sly or you will tell your mother everything. And try to persuade yourself that you are not really in love with him. You are very young to be thinking seriously of marriage. Wait awhile and meet more men, and some day you will find one nearer your own age and more suited to you than a man old enough to be your father could possibly be, even if he was open and aboveboard. Don't let him come between that dear mother and yourself, for no man ever born was worth it. The more worthy he is, the less he would try to do so.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

Some time ago I wrote you for advice and you gave it to me, for which I am very grateful. I am writing again, but I can imagine what you will say. One thing I omitted in my first letter is that I'm not allowed to go with fellows, but I do just the same. I have for the past two years, for that matter. I tell the fellows that I live in my girl friend's house, and that she is from out of town. I hate to tell them these hateful lies, but I daren't bring them to my house, although my sister-in-law has asked me to do it just the same. She says my folks will soon get used to it and won't mind. But I dread a scene. I am the only girl, stay at home and help around the house a bit. My brothers give me money every week, and dad does also, but I feel as if I was only in the way and that they don't love me at all. I am dying for love, but never seem to get it. Mother scolds me all the time, and I'm simply disgusted.

If I could only have some freedom, meaning have my friends at my own house, coming in any time without always getting scolded, I'd be so happy. To-night I am so unhappy that I am almost planning to leave home to get away from all this. You perhaps think that it is all my fault for not getting along at home, but I don't think so. Neither does my girl friend think so. She also has troubles with her dad.

Mrs. Morton! What would you advise me to do about what I have written to-night? May I please hear from you? I mean a personal answer, but you may print this letter if you want to. You will think I am awful, the way I am writing to you, but I feel as if I really knew you, so please forgive me. Best wishes and luck to you.

Frieda.

Did you read what I said to Bluebird, Frieda? Your prescription is the same as hers: get some work to do, or at least a hobby that will interest you. No, I don't think you are "awful" at all, but only that you have too much time to brood. Perhaps your mother considers that you think too much about the boys, and if you show her you can be honestly interested in something else also, she won't object so much to your friendship with them. Try to please her, Frieda. Try to

understand and love her. After all, she is older and wiser than you; she has had more experience of the world. She seems too strict, I have no doubt, merely because she is afraid for you, and if you prove to her that you can be a sensible, level-headed girl she will relax her vigilance.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I have just finished reading ALL-STORY *and truly enjoyed its contents. I am a girl of sixteen and I am full of life. I like to have good times, and I usually get them, but I have to do it in an underhand way. That is why I am writing to you and ask your advice. I hate deceit, but sometimes I do it.*

My mother and father are wonderful parents, and I love them with all my heart, but they are so strict with me. Mother will let me go all over with a bunch of girls to have a good time, but when it comes to going out with a fellow it is terrible. She thinks I am too young. She wants me to work hard in school and not worry about fellows. But the girls in my crowd are always going out with fellows, and some of them are only fifteen. Of course I always get a chance to go out with fellows, and sometimes I take the risk and go out and enjoy myself. Mother lets me come home from a dance with a fellow, but she will not let me go out of town with any. But I have gone without her consent, and she has never found out. But, Mrs. Morton, it is very hard for me to deceive such a mother as I have. She is so good and kind, anything I want I get and yet I deceive her. She trusts me so, too.

But still can I, a young girl full of life, always laughing and enjoying myself, give up little parties of four and six and sit home night after night thinking of the good times other girls younger than myself are having? And still if I go out I am always bothered with a guilty conscience. But must I let all the pleasure of life pass me by? But though your advice brings me happiness or heartache, I shall abide by it because I believe in you. Please remember I love my parents, but I also love and crave good times, but what you say I shall do. I am waiting.

Sixteen.

My dear, your mother is right. Sixteen isn't so *very* much older than fifteen, now is it? And those other girls who are not so carefully guarded and protected as you are may have bitter reason some day to wish they had been. You say you love your parents "with all your heart," but if you really did, would you not be willing to let them judge what is best for you until you are a little older? Your mother apparently sees to it that you have a good deal of wholesome enjoyment; the fact that some girls have too much freedom need not make you unhappy. The pleasures of life won't pass you by, Sixteen. There will be plenty of time for everything you crave later on. And in years to come I am sure you will be thankful you had a mother like yours—generous, affectionate, tender and *protecting.*

The next letter is one I want all you girls to read:

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I have read in your department for some time and enjoy it quite a lot, for it brings ease to my weary heart. I am a girl twenty years old, all alone in this lovely world, and very lonesome. At times I think there's no use living, for I've no one to put confidence in. I have been married, but my husband and I only stayed together three days when he was killed. Ever since I've tried to

find happiness, but it seems there's none for me. Some girls say, "My mother does" this or that. Oh, how I wish my little mother was near just to know how I've missed her love.

One That Is Lonesome.

I will not point the moral of this letter for Frieda and Sixteen and other girls who feel as they do. The next one, also, is from a girl who is motherless:

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I wonder if you could give me a little consolation. I'm just sick of everything. It seems as if the better you try to be, the worse people make you. I am just fifteen. At the age of thirteen I quit school, I was in first year of high, and came to keep house for dad. You see, my mother died when I was twelve.

I am not wild, but like to have fun. I'm five feet five, have brown curly hair, green eyes, and am considered nice looking. I can bake, wash, sew and keep a house cleaner than most girls of my age. I don't use rouge or lipstick, and don't smoke or drink. I am never out later than ten o'clock. Dad wants me home then. I have two sisters, one twelve and one nine years old. They go to school. So you see, between dad and my two sisters, and the baking, sewing, mending and washing, saying nothing of keeping the house clean, I am kept pretty busy. Even my worst enemy has to admit that I can keep house.

But, Mrs. Morton, they won't let me alone. If any one comes here every one has their heads out of the doors. If a man, agent or otherwise, comes here I am the worst girl in town. If I entertain girl friends I use all my dad's money. Will you please tell me what I am to do? Dad doesn't care. In fact he urges me to have girl friends, and even boys drop in in the evening. Dad trusts me and doesn't like to see me sit around by myself. And I love to dance, go on hikes and picnics. In order to win respect it seems I cannot do these things. The daughters of these same women who talk about me can. They do things I blush to think of. And they are my age, even younger.

Do you think that is fair? I envy them because they can go to school. And they envy me! The daughters, I mean.

Gossiped About.

In a little town like the one you live in, child, many women do not have enough to do to take up their minds, and so they do show an undue interest in other people's affairs. You are more exposed to criticism than most girls because you have no woman to watch over you, but those whose good opinion is worth having would surely respect you for the effort you are making, and sympathize with your position rather than find fault with you. So long as you yourself know you are doing right, dear, and so long as that nice father of yours approves of what you do, I'd not let the gossip bother me. All of it is thoughtless, and most of it is harmless. It cannot hurt you with those who really matter, your real friends. Look up a book of "Æsop's Fables" in the library and read the one about the Man, his Son and the Donkey. They tried to please the people who criticized them, and what did they get for it? First the boy rode the donkey, and people said "For shame! To let that poor old man walk while you ride!" So then the man rode, and they said, "For shame! To let a poor boy walk while you, a big strong man, ride!" Then they both got on the donkey and people said, "For shame!

The poor donkey!" So then they tied the donkey's feet together and strung him on a pole and carried him. And then *everybody* laughed. All those years ago Æsop knew that you can't please all the people, no matter what you do. So you might as well be criticized for what you want to do as what you don't want to do, so long, as I said before, as you yourself and your nearest and dearest know you are doing right. Try not to think about the gossip, and when others repeat ill-natured remarks to you, refuse to listen. There are always pleasant things to talk about instead.

The last letter of all is one which touches on both the main subjects we have discussed this week. It is from a woman who is kept too strictly, but the keeper is her husband instead of a parent, and the reason for his conduct is an almost insane jealousy. I am leaving it unanswered here, since it is a letter for the many to consult about, rather than the one, and I do not want my opinion to influence any one else's. But I hope, as the writer does, that readers will be interested in her predicament and will write to her.

Dear Mrs. Morton:

I hardly know how to begin to tell you my story. I often wonder if there is a woman anywhere situated like me. I'm a prisoner in my own house, or perhaps I should say my husband's house. I was married five years ago, when I was only eighteen, and I'd always been unhappy at home, for my father was a tyrant. He treated mother brutally, and my sister and I never dared call our souls our own. I met this man and fell in love with him and married him, and he brought me to this town, which is in another State, and I soon learned that he is just as bad as my father in his own way. Not that he is brutal. He never beats me or abuses me physically, but he is so frightfully jealous. He won't let me step outside the yard unless he is with me, and he has never let me have my mother or sister here, and I've never been to see them since I was married.

He takes me to the movies once a week and for a ride on Sunday, but he does all the marketing—he says he doesn't want me talking to men in stores—and when we walk down town he has tight hold of my arm all the time, and I don't dare look right or left or he will accuse me of flirting with loafers in the street. And when we are riding he will buy me anything I want, but I have to sit in the car while he gets it.

Our house is real nice and I have every kind of convenience to do the work. I even have an electric refrigerator, and it is wonderful, but the reason he got it was so we wouldn't have to have an iceman calling. And if something gets out of order he makes me go upstairs and stay in my room and he stays home from work to meet the man who comes to fix whatever it is that's wrong.

There is just one neighbor near us, a nice spinster lady, and she spoke to me one day when her cat got into our yard, and it is through her that I have heard of you, for she brings me books and magazines to read. She puts them through the fence, for a year ago he ordered her to stay off our place, and I have to hide them from him or I don't know what he'd do. He does bring me books from the library, but they are heavy things to read. I was never educated up to that kind of reading and can't seem to get interested.

Now I will tell you about that time a year ago. My neighbor coaxed and coaxed me to defy my husband and go out with her some afternoon. She said she is only an old maid, but she thought she could handle him. So finally I got ready and went. I have some nice clothes, but not very stylish ones. They are too long. We walked down town as bold as brass—it is quite a bit—and went into a drug store and sat down at the fountain. Now this is just a little town. Somehow my husband happened to come in and he snatched me away from that counter and marched me home as if I'd been a naughty child. He called me all sorts of names and raved and swore so you'd never believe it. It didn't sound as if he was in his right mind. He said he'd lock me in the house every day unless I promised him never to try such a trick again, and finally I promised for the sake of peace. But he wouldn't trust me, so after that he locked my shoes away so I can't go out on the street when he's not there. I wear bedroom slippers all day long. And he went over to Miss Allen's—that's the neighbor—and told her she'd been contaminating me and she'd better keep off his property and I don't know what all.

Mrs. Morton, I have often dreamed of running away from him, but what would become of me if I did? I haven't one cent of money in the world, and I can't do anything but housework. I don't suppose I could find any work right away, and he would find me and kill me, wherever I was, anyway.

Miss Allen says she won't interfere any more. She is afraid of what he would do to himself or me if she did, and she says she would never forgive herself if anything happened. And I don't want to leave anyhow. He is all I have. I just want to change him and make him let me have a little freedom and a little life. I do not mean by that bad life, but just the good times other young people have. Do you know any one else like me, Mrs. Morton? Do any of your readers know of anybody else? Can you help? Won't everyone please write me? I am giving Miss Allen's address and we will both watch for your answer.

A Slave Wife.

The Heart of You

PROUD as a knight, of days long gone,
With shining shield and mace;
You bring me trophies, dearly won,
From out the market place.

You bid me keep my dreams alight—
In some far, favoring breeze,
We'll rub Aladdin's lamp, so bright,
And sail the seven seas!

Oh, better than the wealth of kings,
Or magic dreams come true;
I love the dear and childlike things
Hid in the heart of you.

—*Blanche Whiting Keysner.*

Choosing a Career

Conducted by
ELIZABETH WRIGHT

HAVE you found your ideal job? Are you satisfied with your present salary? If not, let Miss Wright advise you.

In these pages many new and attractive professions for girls are discussed. If one of these appeals to you, and you wish to learn more about it, address your letter to Elizabeth Wright, care "Choosing a Career" Department, All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York. A stamped, addressed envelope will bring you an answer by mail.

THE girl who is going into business with a view to bettering her condition—and not for a mere pastime—would do well to look into the candy business.

Before you start your candy business you must consider your market—how you are going to sell. Canvassing seems the quickest way, but it is *not* the most desirable. In fact, to most young women it is absolutely out of the question, and we will, therefore, not consider it.

The two other ways to build up trade are by working, first, through one's friends and acquaintances, and, second, through letter writing and advertising. Opening a little shop right at first is too perilous.

The best time to begin the candy business is in the winter. There is an extra demand for candy at this time, and the girl who is just starting out finds customers more readily than in the summer season.

The very first thing for you to do is to make certain of your candy supply. You can, of course, make it for yourself, but this is a distinct art and has very little to do with the marketing of candy. Unless you have skilled help you cannot manufacture your own candy and sell it also. The beginner would do well to purchase her candy. But where?

The big candy companies will sell candy to you. But they will not make a big reduction unless you can buy in quantity. The candy companies argue that they have their own shops. And for the first few months you will buy only a few pounds a day. You will purchase so cautiously, and in such small quantities, selecting so many different

Google

kinds, that the big manufacturer can hardly afford to bother with you.

You must find some woman who is making candy and who will sell it to you by the five or ten pounds as you need it. The big colleges have cooking schools and they will sometimes recommend one of their graduates who can guarantee to make candy conscientiously and well.

If there is no college near by an advertisement in the newspapers will bring a score of replies.

Ask the candy maker to give you samples of her candy. You are going to deal, of course, in fine chocolates and fancy mixed. This means candy of the *bon bon* variety, and it must have three outstanding qualities: it must look attractive, it must taste good, and, most important of all, it must keep. Candy that hardens in a few days and loses its color and sweetness is of no use whatever to the candy merchant.

The candy maker tells you—if she knows her business—that the chief worry to her is the matter of transportation. To get the candy to you while it is fresh means a great waste of time for her. If you will send for it she can let you have it for what seems to you a reasonable sum. One candy maker will give it to you for forty cents a pound; another will want fifty. If you are willing to call as soon as the candy is made, thus taking it off her hands and out of her way, she may possibly do a little better for you. That is a matter for personal arrangement, but it is important. Pay cash if possible, which means a discount.

You wonder what you are going to do with the candy! Your next move is to buy boxes. Select a good durable color—not white, because it will soil too easily; this also cuts out pale yellow and light blue. A good durable pink is excellent, and red is still better. A striking candy box would be black decorated with red, blue and yellow, in impressionistic designs.

If you can possibly afford it, select tin boxes. These do not soil and they can be obtained in various colors. Besides, they preserve the candy and make it easy to handle and to ship to a distance.

By ordering tin boxes by the hundred you can get them for about six

This Week's Hint For Making More Money

Decorating Candles and Candlesticks:

Tin candlesticks can be bought for a few cents each when purchased in dozens. It is then attractive work to transform them into things of beauty, and eventually to sell them for bridge prizes, birthday gifts and what not.

First the candlesticks are painted and when dry stenciled in odd patterns. The stencil patterns are cut out of heavy stencil paper; either original designs can be used or others copied. Monograms and initials are very popular as decorations.

For weddings and other special occasions transfer pictures of birds and flowers are all the vogue at present.

Tin candlesticks can also be rubbed down to look like pewter.

The candles to accompany may be made with very little trouble, using candle molds and choosing—or originating—dyes to match the color scheme of the candlesticks.

Methods of finishing and decorating candles and sticks to match are endless. And other objects may be stenciled and painted likewise—for instance, typewriter covers.

Miss Wright will furnish details—what to charge, *et cetera*, if you will write her enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.

cents each. They are round, eight inches across and two inches deep. By alternating the candies as you pack them, using both light and heavy sweets, you can make the box hold just two pounds. This is a matter for experiment and experience.

You will need the little paper cups in all colors in which to fit the candies. This keeps them from clinging together. For a dollar one can buy five hundred of them.

Now for your customers. Pack a box of candy and, if you are in business, show it to your friends. If you stay at home display it to one of the neighbors.

Tell her that you are selling candy, and ask her to let her friends know about it.

One person tells another. The neighbor tells her friends. If you are in an office one girl shows the box to another. Soon you have a very nice list of customers. And it grows steadily, an endless chain, as long as you keep up the quality.

And here you must be as wise as an owl and as cunning as a serpent! With each fresh consignment of candy you must, as a precaution, extract one piece. Let it be a chocolate cream, a coconut cream, covered with rose-flavored sugar; a maple nut, coated with lemon cream—what not? Put your sample away after you have labeled it. Place it in a little box. On the box write the date you received it. One week from that day you may test the candy. If it has not kept in perfect condition for a week, growing richer in flavor and smoother in texture, it is not good candy. The candy maker has been slighting your order. Or, very likely, she has been cheated by her dealer, who, in turn, has bought inferior goods. It is a vicious circle and you must correct it.

A little candy booth in a big office building is an excellent thing from a money-making standpoint. If a constant supply of fresh candy is always on hand, done up marvelously, and adapted to special occasions, the little booth is bound to pay.

These are the fundamentals upon which the beginner must build. She will branch out in this direction until her little candy booth takes on the proportions of a skyscraper.

I'll be very glad to answer any questions for my readers.

FIRST LOVE

By HAGAR WILDE

A glamorous, compelling new novelette complete in the next issue

ON THE STANDS NOV. 13th

In Confidence

Practical First Aid to Everyday Living

Conducted by

DOROTHEA DALE

ANY question about the little problems that confront you daily in your business or social life Mrs. Dale will be glad to answer. No question is too small. Write her about anything that is perplexing you—how to word a letter, how to travel, what present to give, what to say and when, table etiquette, et cetera.

If an emergency arises and you need immediate advice your letter will be answered by return mail, if you will inclose a return envelope stamped and addressed.

All letters will be held in strict confidence.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

A girl I admire a great deal, although I do not know her very well, has just lost her mother. Would you please tell me the proper kind of letter of condolence to write her.

Ann Martin.

It is getting to be more and more the custom in cosmopolitan circles simply to insert one's visiting card in a small envelope, having written on it a few words, and send it to the bereaved friend or acquaintance. "With deepest sympathy" expresses all you want to say. You might draw a line through the "Miss" on your card, and also, if this girl calls you by your first name, through the "Martin."

If you don't happen to have a card at hand, write a simple, short letter, just saying how very sorry you were to hear of her great sorrow, and that you wish you could help. Sign yourself "Sympathetically and"—if the acquaintance justifies it—"affectionately, Ann." That would be better than trying to quote all the pious platitudes people once thought necessary. Even references to the Source of all comfort might do nothing but harrow her feelings just now.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

Will you please tell us who Mrs. Grundy is or was, and why people care what she thinks?

Two Flappers in Cleveland.

"Mrs. Grundy" never existed in real life, nor even as a character in a book or on the stage. But 'way back in 1798 the English playwright, Thomas Morton, wrote a drama called "Speed

the Plough." Dame Ashfield, one of the characters, was constantly exclaiming, no matter what happened or was proposed, "What will Mrs. Grundy say?"

The actress who originally played the part made such a hit with it that the line became a byword in London and, later, on this side of the ocean. To this day, Mrs. Grundy is referred to as the type of person who is very strict and narrow-minded in her observance of the proprieties, the kind who is always taking the joy out of life for those who are at all daring and unconventional.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

We have recently moved to Long Island from the Middle West and I don't know anybody in the East. My husband has his business in the city, but I am very lonely. We would like to join the country club here. Would it be possible to write and ask them to admit us?

Norma Ferris.

If the club is very informal a letter of application might be permissible, but it is infinitely better to wait for an invitation, or at least until you are well enough acquainted with a member to ask to have your name proposed.

It is a slow and tedious process to make friends in a new town, but there are several ways of doing it. Are you sure that none of your lifelong friends at home have acquaintances or relatives near you to whom they could write in your behalf? Even so, you must wait, of course, for the older residents to make the first advances. *You must not "push!"*

Then there is always church. If you go regularly, sooner or later you will find congenial spirits among the congregation. You might join the Parent-Teachers' Association, too. You will be welcome, even if you have no children of your own. Show yourself interested at every opportunity in community affairs, and gradually people will come to know and like you. Meanwhile, civic or charitable work will not only open the gate to new acquaintances for you, but will be a refuge from the loneliness.

Dear Mrs. Dale:

I play the saxophone, uke and piano in our school orchestra. All the other members are boys. Is it proper for me to go out of town to play in concerts with them? Also, I am sometimes invited without the others to go to nearby towns to play for entertainments and dances in an orchestra I have never seen. Usually they are all men. Is it necessary for me to have a chaperon?

Nellie X.

What a talented girl you are, Nellie, and how very well you must play in order to be asked about like that. To be sure, the chaperon is a vanishing institution, and on many of the occasions when she was once considered indispensable she would seem an absurd sort of "excess baggage" to modern eyes. But in even the most careless society it cannot look correct for a girl as young as you are—of high school age—to gad about alone with a crowd of boys and return late at night or early the next morning.

I have no doubt, Nellie, that your own good sense and pride would chaperon you adequately from the point of view of morals. But why give our friend Mrs. Grundy any chance to meddle with your affairs and blemish your reputation? She does not trouble to find facts: she grasps at the slightest appearance of carelessness. And since

you are already more or less in the public eye anything you do will be doubly noticed.

If your mother is unable to go with you, and you have no elder married sister or cousin, certainly there must be among your acquaintances an older woman, one whom the boys would like and who would not be a "wet blanket" on the party, but a perfectly human and sympathetic companion. She would add to the enjoyment of everybody and she would, above all, protect you from being misjudged and carped at by the gossips we have always with us.

Better be sure than sorry, **Nell.**

Please Write to Us!

Every day when the mail-man comes around, we look eagerly for personal correspondence from our readers. The happiest moments of our busy day are those in which we receive letters from friends we have never seen—girls who write what they really think of ALL-STORY magazine.

YOU who are reading this, right now, please tell us what stories you like best in this issue, and what stories you do not care for. Which of these four departments do you find most helpful—Handwriting and Happiness—Heart-to-Heart—Choosing a Career—In Confidence?

If you're too busy to write a letter, just fill out this coupon and mail it. ***Thank you!***

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

In the Eyes of the World.....

A China Sea Romance.....

Tricked .....

A Heart to Let.....

Molly's Man.....

Love in Peril.....

The Substitute Lover.....

Wooing Wings .....

Remembered Rapture .....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)